

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Potten End Church of England Primary School

Church Road, Potten End, Berkhamsted, Herts HP4 2QY

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Dates of inspection: 22 January 2016

Date of last inspection: 9 December 2010

School's unique reference number: 117414

Headteacher: Andrew Morris

Inspector's name and number: Lindsay Fraser 107

School context

Potten End Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is an average sized primary school. At the time of the previous inspection the school was a first school. Following re-organisation in the Berkhamsted area the school retained its first Year 5 in 2014 and its first Year 6 in 2015. Considerable building work has taken place. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2015. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Pupil Premium eligibility is low and the number of those with special educational needs and disabilities is below average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Potten End Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The passion and commitment of the headteacher, based on strong Christian values, ensures that the needs of all pupils are addressed.
- The high quality of relationships, attributed to the school's Christian character, ensures that morale in the school is high because each child and each adult is valued and cared for.
- The explicit teaching of Christian values within collective worship has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and behaviours.
- The partnership between the church and the school, including the valued contribution of the vicar, is supporting pupils' spiritual development, especially in the development of prayer.

Areas to improve

- Ensure governors fully understand, celebrate and regularly monitor and evaluate the impact of the schools' Christian character to inform strategic planning.
- Update the school's website to reflect fully the good and outstanding practice of the school as a church school so that the school community is fully informed.
- Deepen pupils' understanding and experience of different faiths and denominations by visiting a variety of places of worship and inviting faith leaders to the school.

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

From the moment visitors walk through the doors they are met with a welcoming and loving atmosphere based on the school's strong Christian character. This is because relationships at all levels are excellent. The staff speak enthusiastically and proudly of their high morale which permeates throughout the school and impacts upon pupils. Pupils also are ebullient in describing excellent behaviour within the school which is based on a very effective Christian values programme, underpinned by Biblical teachings. Pupils are keen to attribute their behaviour and attitudes to Biblical stories and were eager to share their knowledge of many stories, such as Daniel's courage, the parable of the feeding of five thousand and Solomon's wisdom, and how they could relate to their own circumstances. Their knowledge of the Bible stories is strong because of the teaching they receive in collective worship and the high quality teaching of Christianity in religious education (RE). The introduction of a 'Storytelling through Art' day has further enhanced their enthusiasm and understanding. This involved members of the church congregation supporting the pupils in depicting, with the use of various media, their favourite Bible stories. Parents are extremely eager to praise the school for 'going above and beyond their expectations' in supporting their children, especially those with specific needs. Pupils' personal development is a priority. Each pupil is valued as being unique and those with special educational needs or vulnerable pupils have clear interventions in place, are well cared for and their needs met. This is one of the reasons for the school being oversubscribed. Academic achievement has been consistently high at the end of Key Stage 1. Parents and pupils speak highly of the way in which the school has adapted to meet the academic, social and personal needs of pupils who have remained in the school for Years 5 and 6 since the reorganisation of Berkhamsted schools in 2014. Parents are very confident that their children have benefited substantially from the school becoming a primary school. Pupils also feel very confident that they are well prepared for their secondary transfer. Pupils know that they can express their own beliefs and opinions because they know that their views and questions are respected by everyone. The quality of teaching in RE ensures that pupils have a very good knowledge, understanding and respect for the teachings and practices of other faiths, although pupils agree that more opportunities to visit places of worship of other faiths and denominations will enhance their understanding, an area already identified by senior leaders. Pupils of faiths other than Christian enjoy sharing their beliefs and feel confident in doing so. Spirituality is an area which has developed since the previous inspection and each classroom now has an area for reflection which pupils say they frequently use. A new outside area, created as a result of the school extension, lends itself well to the gathering of the whole school for special times. Pupils and adults were keen to describe the moving remembrance service when the headteacher played the 'Last Post', heard also at the village memorial ceremony. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is securely underpinned by a very effective and engaging curriculum, enhanced by a wide range of clubs, including the eco-council. Opportunities, including leadership development, have been further developed to meet the needs of the oldest pupils

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The effective partnership with the local church and with 'Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead' is a substantial strength in the quality of collective worship. The range of leaders enables pupils to have a rich experience of worship. Pupils speak very positively of collective worship and value it as an important aspect of their development. The local vicar is involved in the planning and leadership of collective worship. Planning is based on an agreed set of values and the Anglican lectionary, whilst the structure is based on gathering, engaging, responding and sending, enabling pupils to participate in and understand the meaning of worship. Planning is cohesive, enabling themes to be well developed and understood. 'The way it is done, through role play and involvement, helps us remember' was the consensus of opinion amongst Year 6 pupils. A visual focus of Christian artefacts creates an atmosphere conducive to pupils'

spiritual development and reflection. Pupils develop an understanding of the links between Christian faith and social action as a result of many opportunities. These include making gifts for the community at Harvest Festival, the donation of food to the local foodbank and the invitation to lunch on occasions for retired members of the community. All classes worship in the church once a month. This is led by the local vicar and joined by parents and members of the community, a time which is valued by all. The focus on prayer in the school is explicit and is a valued and respected part of pupils' experience. In the first collective worship of the week pupils together compose a prayer to use daily as part of worship. Spontaneous prayer is also invited from pupils, based on 'our school, our world, our rulers, friends and the sick'. All pupils know and recite regularly the Lord's Prayer. In preparation for lunchtimes each class creates a prayer at the beginning of term which is then used daily. There are many opportunities also within the classroom for prayer. Because of the close relationship with Holy Trinity Church there is some knowledge of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but pupils' understanding is still at a relatively early stage. Pupils are actively involved in worship, through its delivery, participation, leadership and contributing their ideas. Each class leads a monthly worship, based on the current value, which impacts positively on both the class leading and the rest of the school. The long term planning of collective worship incorporates pupils' comments. However, school leaders have yet to undertake formal observations of collective worship and to evaluate the impact upon pupils.

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

The headteacher is unequivocal in his vision, passion and commitment to ensure that every individual pupil is given the opportunity to maximise their potential in their academic, spiritual and personal development, underpinned by the school's strong Christian ethos. This vision is shared by all adults in the school and clearly acknowledged by parents. Both parents and staff are overwhelmingly supportive of the headteacher and the school. The mutual benefit of the strong partnership between the school and the church is evident. As well as the very effective involvement in school of the vicar, the youth worker and congregation, pupils are also involved in the church through participation in church events, services and celebrations, fund-raising and the contribution of prayers to be used in the church. The monthly 'Messy Church' for all age groups is held in the school hall. The parochial church council has contributed financially to the purchase of Bibles and Christian diaries for older pupils. Links with Churches of Hemel Hempstead have also enabled the school to benefit from children's Bibles and a monthly collective worship input from one of its members. Governors have been relentless in their determination to ensure a smooth and successful transition from a first school to a primary school and have clearly listened to and acted upon the views and concerns of parents and pupils. Coinciding with this has been their commitment to succession planning for the appointment of a new headteacher, leading to a seamless transfer of church school leadership. Training in church school leadership has been limited to the headteacher. RE is led and co-ordinated by a specialist teacher, appointed by the senior leadership to ensure high quality teaching of Christianity and other faiths. As a result, standards are rising. Governors involved all stakeholders in the establishment of core values in 2015 which led to a review of the school's vision statement and aims. The school regularly seeks the views and opinions of parents. Parent involvement is highly valued as demonstrated in the effective parent forum which meets on a regular basis and has impacted upon school practice. Governors are very aware of the strengths and areas for development within the school, although they are less clear in their understanding of the link between the school's Christian character and achievement. Leadership of the school has also identified the need to be more pro-active in sharing and celebrating the schools' Christian values and distinctiveness with parents and the wider community.

SIAMS report January 2016 Potten End Church of England Primary School, Church Road, Potten End, Berkhamsted, Herts HP4 2QY