



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Giles Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Blanch Lane, South Mymms, Potters Bar, EN6 3PE

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Dates of inspection: 12 March 2015

Date of last inspection: 21 May 2007

School's unique reference number: 117564

Headteacher: Susan Ridge

Inspector's name and number: Lilian Weatherley 42

School context

St Giles Church of England Primary school is a smaller than average primary school with 97 pupils on roll, taught in four classes. At the time of this inspection it is in Ofsted category 'Requires Improvement' (RI). The large majority of pupils are of white British origin. The number of pupils with special educational needs or supported is above average. The proportion at school action plus or with statements is below average. There has recently been a high turnover of staff. Vacancies for a permanent member of staff and vicar of the parish will be filled when new appointments take up their positions next term.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Giles C of E Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The Christian values programme is fully embedded and is having a visible impact on standards, behaviour and attendance
- St Giles has a strong distinctive Christian character which has a significant impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Anglican tradition and Christian worship
- The school is praised by stakeholders for the Christian love and care shown to all pupils especially those pupils who have special educational needs or other difficulties

Areas to improve

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in religious education (RE) to ensure consistency of practice across the school
- Raise standards in RE by ensuring pupils know and understand key religious concepts in Christianity and the other faiths studied
- Continue to improve the school's attendance rate.
- Ensure that the governing body regularly challenges the school in order to bring about more rapid improvement

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

It is clear from the moment of entering the school that St Giles is a church school with a strong distinctive Christian character. The prayer trees in the gardens and the range of colourful displays clearly reflect the importance given to this aspect of the school. For example, the pupils all know and understand the chart showing the hierarchy of Anglican clergy from the Archbishop of Canterbury to the bishops in the diocese and the previous vicar of St Giles. Standards are now in line with national average and the trend is showing a significant rise for this year. The recent high turnover of staff has had a negative effect on the pupils' standards and behaviour but a new permanent member of staff has now been appointed. Pupils' behaviour is good around the school and in the playground but less good in lessons when they are not motivated and challenged. The school's Christian character has a high profile and consistently informs the school's approach to attendance which is rising steadily and is now in line with the national average. Pupils are eager to explain the flying kites display, which highlights the improved attendance figures for each class, and the attendance tea party for those with improved attendance. Pupils now have family groupings based on 15 Christian values and colours, for example emerald for respect and tolerance. The pupils have designed their 'family group' shields based on these colours and biblical texts. Parents praise the values education programme and its impact on their children. For example, the Christian value shields on commitment and perseverance are helping to encourage encouraging good attendance and behaviour. The school has a significant number of challenging pupils. Parents speak highly of the Christian ethos and the support, love and care shown to their children. One parent explained, 'After a very difficult time, my son is now flourishing'. The pupils all feel safe and well cared for. The older pupils look after the younger and the school ambassadors are there to support the pupils. 'We can help people if they don't know what to do or where to go.' Pupils are proud of their school, enjoy their lessons and speak fondly of their teachers. 'I like our teachers and pupils because we all try to follow in Jesus' footsteps.' The school has worked hard to create an environment where spiritual development can take place and spiritual, moral social and cultural development is at least good. Pupils recognise the importance of RE and speak enthusiastically about the numerous opportunities around the school and in the classrooms for prayer and reflection. 'I like the prayer tree and our sacred area in the field.' The new interactive question boards are also having a significant impact on pupils' ability to raise questions about all aspects of their learning, and the 'Going for Goals' initiative is raising pupils' aspirations. St Giles is an inclusive school where all pupils are treated as individuals. Bullying is rare but dealt with effectively and efficiently when it occurs. The Christian values of love and respect are shown to all. Pupils understand these and regularly show support for charities including Red Nose Day, Children in Need, a children's centre in Nairobi and Great Ormond Street hospital. Pupils are also encouraged to suggest causes and one child was sponsored to have her hair cut to make a wig for a cancer victim. One parent commented, 'the school teaches children decent morals and how to treat people in the right way and not to discriminate against others'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Prayer and worship meet statutory requirements and have a very high profile, with the school's Anglican heritage playing a key part. The area for development in the previous SIAMS report has been addressed in full and the school has benefited from close links with the parish church of St Giles. The previous incumbent, known as Mother Brenda, gave huge support and guidance. Working together with the staff she has ensured that prayer and worship are well planned, monitored and underpin every aspect of the school. Each classroom has sacred space providing a reflective area which is used by both staff and pupils. The 'blessing bottles' in these areas are filled with pupils' prayers and reflections as are other designated areas of the school. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the sacred trees and their spiritual garden in the school grounds. The pupils designed the garden and dedicated it to their gardener who, before he died, helped them grow plants and flowers. It is used daily. The numerous 'lolly sticks' placed in the earth votive candle stand reflect the importance the school gives to prayer. Pupils benefit from numerous opportunities around the school to think, reflect and pray. All pupils interviewed said how important prayer was in their lives. 'I like the prayer gardens because they let you pray to God.' The whole-school worship observed was led completely by the Year 6 students who were eager to share their excitement at being allowed to lead worship for a visitor. The pupils showed clear enjoyment of worship and a clear understanding of Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday and Lent, when questioned by the Year 6 pupils. They all sang the hymn with gusto and joined in the Christian greetings and Lord's Prayer. Pupils are given a small wooden cross when they learn the Lord's prayer and several girls explained how they had made chains to wear it around their necks. All pupils from EYFS upward have an age appropriate understanding of the Trinity, know the key Christian symbols, the liturgical colours, the Grace and a range of Christian greetings. They benefit from regular fortnightly visits to the church and prior to the arrival of the new vicar the school has been strongly supported by the vicar and curate of the neighbouring parish of All Saints. Parents' questionnaires speak highly of the quality of the worship led by the staff and pupils. 'I think St Giles is a fantastic school and I love going to worship to see all the children singing the hymns with smiles and listening intently to the story of the day.' All pupils are taught to use the Bible and each act of worship is linked to a Christian value and biblical text. The use of Christian values as a foundation means that worship is inclusive and pupils from other faith backgrounds share in it.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

RE meets statutory requirements and has a high profile in the school. Standards are variable, however, and teaching and learning across the school are inconsistent. Where teaching is good or better, pupils are motivated and engaged with their learning and standards are in line or above the national average. In lessons with good or better teaching pupils' thinking is challenged by high expectations. Pupils are motivated by difficult RE concepts and rigorous tasks, with resulting good progress. The lesson on the Eucharist was a good example of pupils enjoying their learning and making good progress in their knowledge and understanding of difficult ideas and concepts such as 'consecrated'. Where teaching is less than good, it is focused on superficial portrayals of Bible stories and low-level tasks. Pupils are not engaged, their attention wanders, they begin to lose interest and behaviour deteriorates. This has not been helped by a series of teachers and the need for supply cover. All pupils like RE and it is a popular subject. 'RE is my favourite subject' was said by many of the pupils interviewed. The RE ambassador has a key role in the school and explained how she helps out in RE and shows visitors around, describing the rich and varied RE displays. Pupils have a good basic knowledge and understanding of Bible stories and Christian worship. This is, however, strongly supported by the high quality of the worship rather than a consistently high level of teaching and learning in RE. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of deeper Christian concepts and other faith traditions is less secure and the more able pupils require greater rigour and challenge. The newly appointed RE subject leader has been in post for 18 months and has a clear action plan for improvement. The staff turnover has unfortunately impacted on the speed at which improvement has taken place, with one class having had a series of teachers. There are clear procedures in place for monitoring and evaluation, regular marking and work scrutinies. These help to address the issues from the previous SIAS report. Assessment is currently in line with the Hertfordshire levels but the school is working towards assessment without levels. Pupils' learning is enhanced by regular visits to the parish church and St Alban's Abbey but visits to other places of worship have not been so regular. The subject leader has attended diocesan courses. She has good subject knowledge of the Christian tradition and is able to support staff with their knowledge and understanding of Christianity. Pupils also benefit from parents and pupils from other faith traditions who support RE and are eager to share their faith and practice.

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

After the turmoil of recent months and the high staff turnover the school is now entering a more stable phase. Standards are rising and a new permanent member of staff has finally been appointed. The school's distinctive Christian character has always been at the forefront and the school is recognised for the utmost care given to each individual child. The school's website clearly reflects the fact that St Giles is a church school. The governing body and the senior leadership all have a clear vision for what constitutes an 'outstanding' church school and are set on a course to achieve this. The headteacher is visiting outstanding church schools to gain a greater insight into what can be achieved. Much is already in place. The governing body now has a clear picture of the school's performance and the SIAMS requirements. They understand that they must hold the school to account. They regularly visit the school to attend school council meetings and to monitor RE and worship with the headteacher. The headteacher monitors the quality of teaching across the curriculum on a regular basis and teaching has improved since the last HMI monitoring visit in September 2014. The school and governing body know what is required to bring about change and have action plans in place. The time scales for the success criteria on teaching and learning in RE and other subjects do not always reflect the sense of urgency required if the school is to be judged as good at the next HMI monitoring visit. RE and collective worship do, however, have a high profile in the school and with the pupils and parents. The links with the parish church and diocese have been excellent. Use is made of diocesan courses for staff development and all staff receive 'in house' training on the distinctive nature of church schools. This has been effectively delivered by Mother Brenda and the RE subject leader. The Christian values programme is having an impact on behaviour and attendance, and parents and members of the local community fully support the school and the Christian values taught. 'The school has a lovely friendly atmosphere. It teaches children from an early age its distinctive Christian values.'

SIAMS report March 2015 St Giles Church of England Primary School