



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Little Waltham Voluntary Aided Primary School

The Street
Little Waltham
Chelmsford
CM3 3NY

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex

Dates of inspection: 15 May 2015

Date of last inspection: 1 July 2010

School's unique reference number: 115175

Headteacher: Elizabeth Maycock

Inspector's name and number: Philip Knowles 795

School context

Little Waltham is a small voluntary aided primary school. The majority of pupils are from white British heritage. The number of pupils with special educational needs is higher than average. Those eligible for extra funding due to social disadvantage (Pupil Premium) is low. The school has benefited from effective and stable leadership for the past seven years. The school is well supported by the curate in neighbouring parishes who is also a foundation governor. The school was graded 'Good' by OfSTED during its March 2014 inspection, recognising its significantly improved academic standards.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Little Waltham as a Church of England school are good

- A happy and successful environment where strong leadership, including in religious education (RE), has led to significant improvements in the school's overall standards and effectiveness
- A clearly defined, explicit and distinctive set of Christian values that are explicitly linked to learning and very effectively underpin and permeate the school's work
- The well-established links between the school, local churches and the local community

Areas to improve

- Ensure regular pupil involvement in planning, leading and evaluating the whole school worship programme
- Embed prayer and reflection within school life in order to encourage more personal prayer in order to support pupils' own spiritual journeys
- Improve the consistency of the quality of pupils' recorded work in RE by involving governors strategically and systematically in the monitoring and evaluation process.

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

A measured and sustainable approach towards leadership, grounded in the school's distinctive Christian character, has resulted in significant improvements to the progress pupils make and the standards they achieve. Pupil attainment is now above the national average. Since the previous denominational inspection, pupils, staff and governors have revisited the school's vision

statement. This is now very well linked to the Christian values of forgiveness, creation, koinonia (community), reverence, service, wisdom, trust and endurance. These Christian values have been effectively linked to the 'six super skills' for learning promoted throughout the school. Thus there is an explicit link between the school's Christian distinctiveness and its vision for learning. This has resulted in a school community that can articulate the Christian ethos, and recognises that it is absolutely fundamental to its life and work. The community knows that this is positively impacting on standards. Pupils also recognise this in the context of their own relationships, which are positive and contribute to the atmosphere in school. One child said, 'If we have arguments, us girls in Year 6, we think on our own then we go back and say 'you're forgiven''. Pupils are well supported by staff and say that they are able to contribute to the school community because they feel both listened to and involved. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils and staff value worship as the time when the school meets together as a community and where they enjoy the sense of belonging. One pupil described it as a time when, 'we get together and share our ideas'. Parents value the half-termly assemblies and Christmas services that the school holds in the parish church. They recognise the impact of the worship programme on their children, understanding that it challenges them and 'causes them to ask questions'. The theme for each week's worship is one of the school's Christian values. This ensures that each value is addressed regularly. The rotation encourages pupils' deep understanding and helps to maintain their interest and enthusiasm. Pupils have some choice in the 'value for the week' which is often influenced by recent situations. This effectively links Christian values in a meaningful way with pupils' relationships and their daily lives in school. The worship table, which holds a central place in the main hall, features the cross, a candle and the Bible. There is a prayer tree which pupils are encouraged to use. This enhances worship and provides a colourful and attractive backdrop to the worship table. Different colours used during the Christian year also feature. A prominent display effectively explains these in the context of the Christian calendar. Pupils also contribute their thoughts on the worship that they have experienced to the 'worship reflections' tree. Comments are used during the worship planning process. Acts of worship include elements of the Anglican tradition including a wonderful time of greeting. Here pupils are given time to personally greet each other and shake hands at the start of their worship time. There are opportunities for pupil responses, thoughtful prayers, a Bible story, a time set aside for reflection and a clear Christian message. Pupils regularly say the 'Lord's Prayer' which they know and show some understanding of. Older pupils can explain the basics of the Christian idea of God as 'Trinity'. This is understood as central to the Christian faith and being like a 'triangle of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit'. Children understand that prayer is speaking to God. They clearly value this as something they do during set times. However, they do not show understanding that prayer could potentially be helpful to them outside of these set times.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Pupils engage enthusiastically in their RE lessons because a wide variety of teaching approaches, including drama, discussion and questioning are used. This ensures that lessons are both lively and engaging. The school holds a multi-faith fortnight each year when pupils are given the opportunity to focus on a major world religion. Recently, all pupils have visited a Jewish synagogue, which helped to enhance their understanding of religious diversity. The school also makes regular visits to the parish and other Christian churches. The RE leader is both knowledgeable and enthusiastic. She provides strong subject leadership. She has raised the importance of RE across the school through a range of initiatives focused on raising standards of achievement. Lesson planning, following a two-year rolling programme drawn from the diocesan scheme of work now supports learning well. RE is also taught through literacy, art, dance and Personal Social and Health Education (PHSE). Meaningful links with worship are made via the emphasis on the school's Christian values which are followed through as part of discussion in RE. Recorded RE work shows good progress in pupils' understanding of Christianity and of

other world faiths. It is presented in a variety of ways, reflecting the range of teaching approaches used. The teaching of RE is good. The subject leader has rightly identified the need to improve the quality of teaching further and the subject improvement plan has a clear framework for doing this. Written work in RE is generally of a good standard but in some classes pupils are not taking enough pride in their work and tasks set are not completed. Governors have undertaken some informal monitoring of RE. However, they do not have a strategic overview of RE and its contribution to Little Waltham as a church school.

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

The embedded Christian ethos, well supported by explicit Christian values form the bedrock for the school's life and work. Since the previous denominational inspection the school's Christian vision and ethos has been refreshed and strategically improved by the headteacher. In this she has been ably supported by her staff and governors. Leaders, staff and pupils can communicate the impact of the school's Christian underpinning in detailed and knowledgeable ways. They articulate this impact through, for example, the high quality of relationships, the improving standards of attainment and the importance of caring for and ensuring the wellbeing of the school community. The deep commitment and insightful strategic leadership of the headteacher has been crucial in steering the school through a challenging period. During the past 12 months, there has been a significant turnover of personnel including key governors and the incumbent. This school is very proud of its Christian ethos and values. It celebrates them through its website and through signs, symbols and the many displays which serve to promote the school's Christian distinctiveness well. The school's good links with the diocese and with other schools in the local area enables them to share in cost effective staff training. It provides a wide range of mentoring and training opportunities and support networks as well as succession planning opportunities. The school has very strong and productive links with the parish church and with a local United Reform church (URC). Ministers from both churches contribute to worship. The school engages with both churches to improve service to its families by providing church based activities. These serve to further strengthen the school's Christian identity. The school's links with the wider community are strong and include support for village events and a link with a local secondary school. Pupils and parents recognise that these links enrich school life and the educational experience of the pupils. There is an active friends association which demonstrates well parental and community support for the school. Governors monitoring is done on an informal basis. They have recently used a questionnaire to gather parents' views on Little Waltham as a church school. However, governors' monitoring activities are not strategically scheduled and routinely recorded.

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