

**Chrishall Holy Trinity & St. Nicholas C of E (A) Primary School**

Palmers Lane  
Chrishall  
Royston  
SG8 8QE

**Diocese: Chelmsford**

Local authority: Essex  
Dates of inspection: 23rd March 2012  
Date of last inspection: 27<sup>th</sup> March 2007  
School's unique reference number: 115195  
Headteacher: Sharon Williams  
Inspector's name and number: Rosemary Privett 321

**School context**

Chrishall Holy Trinity and St Nicholas is a smaller than average rural primary school. Pupils are taught in four mixed age classes. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The headteacher has led the school for almost two years following a period of acting headship.

**The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Chrishall Holy Trinity and St Nicholas as a Church of England school are outstanding**

The school is very well led and managed by a committed headteacher who is ably supported by a highly effective staff team and governing body. The whole school is committed to upholding the very strong Christian ethos which underpins all aspects of school life. This enables pupils to make very good progress both academically and spiritually. All members of the school community are valued, and relationships are based on mutual trust and respect.

**Established strengths**

- The high quality of teaching in religious education ( RE) and the contribution this makes to pupils' spiritual and moral development
- The strong and supportive relationships underpinned by Christian values, which permeate all aspects of school life
- The strong and effective partnership between the school, the local churches and the wider community

**Focus for development**

- Develop assessment for learning in RE, to ensure that there is focused time for pupils to discuss the next steps in their learning with staff.

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

The school makes outstanding provision for promoting the self-confidence and self-awareness of its pupils. It is an inclusive community where pupils receive an excellent level of care. This enables them to shine academically and develop the self-esteem that underpins their very positive attitudes to their lessons and other activities. The school's vision encapsulated in REACH (Respect- Enjoyment- Achievement- Christian caring- Health) is understood by all and underpins all aspects of school life. Its importance is articulated by all members of the community. Pupils say that learning is fun in their school and that everyone cares for each other. Parents say that the school is a very caring community where there is, 'a strong sense of belonging,' and... 'the underlying values are apparent from the moment you enter the school.' They also comment that pupils are encouraged to think about 'big questions' which helps them to become rounded, confident and articulate individuals. There are many opportunities for the children to take responsibility such as school council, Eco Squad, play leaders and lunchtime buddies. Great compassion and care is demonstrated through these relationships. The well organised school council takes its role seriously. They are proud of the way that its fundraising for charities enables them to help others. The school environment appropriately reflects the schools Anglican foundation and makes a significant contribution to the spiritual development of pupils. This is evidenced in the way that pupils are able to talk about how they use the prayer board and prayer boxes in the classroom.

Foundation stage pupils are able to speak with confidence about their time in the Forest School where they used the outdoor environment to explore aspects of the Easter story.

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

In acts of worship, the school successfully achieves a balance between what is a joyful activity and time for spiritual reflection. Whatever the tone, there is a strong and consistent focus on Christian teaching. Children understand the symbolism of simple rituals so know when it is appropriate to be exuberant and when to be silent and thoughtful. 'When we light the candle we know God is near.' Pupils are able to describe how these times of reflection help them. Older pupils comment that, 'I use the time to think about the day ahead and ask for God's help.' 'I sometimes ask God to forgive me if I've done something wrong.' The importance of worship to the whole school community is demonstrated by the fact that staff, clergy and other visitors attend and lead acts of worship regularly. The local churches are used regularly to celebrate the major Christian festivals. These occasions are valued by all and help to develop an understanding of aspects of Anglican worship. Prayer is encouraged and is an important feature of the school day. Pupils are able to describe its purpose and the impact it has on them. 'I can ask God for help or thank him for things.' Since the last inspection the school has raised the profile of individual prayer. Pupils say that lots of children use the prayer board and prayer boxes to share individual prayer requests. They value the way in which the Vicar regularly shares these prayers during whole school worship. Pupils participate in collective worship in a wide variety of ways. Younger children are learning to respond to traditional Anglican greetings and older ones plan and lead worship once a week. An outstanding act of worship led by Yr 6 pupils demonstrated that their experiences of worship in school have equipped them to lead it with conviction and an appropriate mix of fun and reverence.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

RE makes an outstanding contribution to the spiritual and moral development of all pupils. It is highly valued as a subject by all members of school staff who teach the subject with conviction. There is very strong leadership and the standard of teaching and learning is outstanding overall. Pupils are highly engaged in lessons. A particular strength of the teaching is the way in which creative resources and very effective questioning techniques are used to explore biblical stories and issues of faith and belief. Role play, use of the outdoor environment and open ended questioning is used very effectively with younger pupils. With older pupils, very effective links are made with literacy. This means that pupils are able to produce thoughtful and mature written responses to questions like... 'why does God allow suffering?' Both the oldest and youngest pupils are confident to share ideas and relate what they are learning to their own lives and experiences. Yr 5 and 6 pupils show great maturity in their ability to discuss the symbolic power of darkness and light. They are able share personal examples of what darkness and light might mean in their lives. Darkness is, 'like losing faith in God'. Light is like, 'no longer being alone as God is always near.' RE makes a considerable contribution to the Christian character of the school. This is seen in the way that pupils across both key stages have an effective understanding of many aspects of Christian faith and practice such as the major festivals and baptism. Assessment in RE has developed since the last inspection. The school now has an effective and manageable approach to track progress and inform future planning. Results show that pupils make good progress as they move through the school and by Year 6, standards are as high and in some cases, higher than in the core subjects. Marking is supportive and helps pupils know what they need to do to improve their RE work. The school's own self-evaluation has correctly identified the need to provide pupils with quality time to discuss their next steps with the teacher.

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

The headteacher's clear personal vision for the school is shared and articulated by staff and governors. The school has continued to move forward since the last inspection. This demonstrates the determination of leaders to sustain and enhance the Christian dimension to the school. An example of this focus on continued improvement is the way in which the worship co-ordinator has developed the times for reflection in worship. The vicar has carefully monitored these and other developments in order to ascertain their impact on pupils. Regular visits to school by members of the governing body mean that they know the school well and are able to offer the headteacher effective challenge and support. Some very effective systems are in place, which enable the school to make accurate judgements of its effectiveness as a church school and pinpoint areas for development. The sense of teamwork

which exists amongst the whole staff team enables all members to feel valued and supported. The leadership of the school has also developed very effective partnerships between the school, the local churches and the village community. Parents speak very highly of the school and its place within the community. Initiatives such as litter picking with members of the Parish council, community lunches in school and tending graves in the churchyard are seen by parents as tangible expressions of 'selflessness ' and service to others.

SIAS report March 2012 Chrishall C of E VA Primary School , Chrishall Royston, SG8 8Q.