

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Clacton Road
Weeley
Essex CO16 9DH

Diocese: Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex

Dates of inspection: 20th November 2012

Date of last inspection: 4th December 2007

School's unique reference number: 115247

Headteacher: Ruth Slater

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Scott 744

School context

This is a Voluntary Aided school located on the edge of the village of Weeley. It is average-sized, with 210 children on roll. The school is over-subscribed and pupils are currently drawn from a wide area, including surrounding villages and Clacton-on-Sea. Pupils are almost all from White British backgrounds. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage with special educational needs is above average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Andrew's Church of England Primary School as a church school are good

This is a happy, caring, inclusive school with a very special atmosphere and outstanding leadership. To be a member of the school community is to feel part of a close-knit Christian family. The school's success has hitherto been built upon an implicit set of Christian values. Now all members of the school community, not least the children, are very clear about the particular Christian values for which the school stands.

Established strengths

- The tone set by the headteacher and the outstanding leadership provided by her and her staff colleagues, supported by the governing body and greatly valued by parents.
- The quality of relationships between all members of the school community, strongly promoted through the school's distinctive Christian character.
- The core Christian values which now underpin the life and work of the school, and the way the children understand these and live them out.
- The high quality of religious education and collective worship which ensures that pupils' spiritual and personal growth are very well promoted.

Focus for development

- Provide further opportunities for children to encounter and develop understanding of people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.
- Involve governors in monitoring collective worship and provide increased opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship.
- Produce a formal action plan for the further development of the school as a church school and update the current religious education[RE] policy.

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

This is a good school marked by a calm, purposeful atmosphere where the personal development of pupils, the quality of relationships and standards of behaviour are outstanding. Children are very happy at school, describing it (and their teachers) in terms such as, 'Brilliant!', 'Amazing!', 'Great!'. They feel valued, safe and well supported. Parents are equally enthusiastic, and this is borne out by parental surveys. All members of the school community attribute the school's success to its long-held Christian vision. The whole school community has recently been involved in the identification of particular core values: the 'St Andrew's six', underpinned by 'love/agape'. Ideas generated by the School Council are ensuring that the values are being securely embedded into school life. The values are prominently displayed around the school, each one accompanied by a relevant Bible passage. This ensures children are clear about the Christian origin of the values and they eagerly explain how each value is derived from the teaching and example of Jesus. Year 6 children have identified a range of further Bible passages to illustrate the values. Pupils have many opportunities to take on responsibilities and speak enthusiastically about fundraising for charities. RE makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as does PSHCE. The school has yet to formally identify where opportunities for such development may be found in other curricular

areas. With regard to community cohesion, at present pupils only have limited first hand opportunities to develop understanding of people from different cultural and religious backgrounds. The school currently does not have a partnership with a school abroad or in a contrasting locality in the UK. Children's understanding of Christian symbolism is enhanced by the fact that colourful crosses are displayed in every classroom and the school hall. The entrance hall currently lacks a Christian symbol to provide a sense of Christian identity.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Whole school collective worship is central to the life of the school. Here the origins and implications of the school's core Christian values are explored. Assemblies are well-planned and well-prepared, with effective use made of stories from Christianity and other religions and Powerpoint presentations. Children take a leading role in some assemblies, but such opportunities need to be extended and pupils also need to be involved in planning. Collective worship always adheres to the same structure which provides a sense of daily ritual. There is singing (a strength of the school), prayer and a time for quiet reflection. The atmosphere is enhanced by the lighting of large candles which provide a visual focus. A recent survey shows that children enjoy assemblies, and their attitude during assembly is almost uniformly excellent. They sit quietly, attentively and respectfully. Assemblies are often led by visitors from different local churches, and the local vicar celebrates the Eucharist in the school twice yearly. Special services are held for major Christian festivals and all members of the school community are agreed that the annual carol service (held in the local church by candle light) is a profoundly spiritual occasion. Through these services, children are developing a good understanding of Anglican traditions and practice. Pupils have just started to record their impressions of collective worship and their comments affirm what the school is currently doing. Governors do not currently have a role in monitoring worship.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

Attainment and progress in RE are in line with other subjects and age-related expectations. The subject is very well led by an organised subject leader who pays great attention to detail. The development of RE has been identified as a priority in the current year and a detailed action plan has been produced showing how improvements are going to be made. One issue is still outstanding: the RE policy has not been reviewed for six years. The school's last SIAS inspection identified the introduction of assessment levels as a focus for development. This has been fully addressed. Training for those teaching RE (including HLTAs) is provided in the use of levels and effective systems for recording attainment and progress are now in place. To achieve consistency, the subject leader has compiled a helpful folder containing levelled samples of children's work. Schemes of work drawing on diocesan and local authority materials ensure an appropriate balance is struck between learning about Christianity and other religions and learning from religion. Learning in RE is enriched through the use of visitors (including Christians and members of other faiths), visits to the local church and the Bible Explorer programme, which the children clearly enjoy. There are currently no visits to non-Christian places of worship which limits pupils' experience of other world faiths. Quality is assured through a range of monitoring and evaluation activities, including lesson observation, scrutiny of lesson plans, work sampling and pupil surveys. The most recent survey shows that children enjoy RE and feel it gives them a good understanding of Christianity. Their enthusiasm for RE was certainly evident in the highly effective lessons that were observed.

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

The school's distinctively Christian character is the direct result of the outstanding leadership provided by the headteacher, ably supported by staff and governors. The headteacher leads by example, modelling the Christian values for which the school stands and 'walking the talk'. All members of the school community have embraced the Christian vision that she has set out and the school feels like a harmonious and happy family. She is totally committed to inclusion and pupils have a strong sense of belonging and being valued. Governors also support this inclusive approach, as can be seen in changes made to the admissions criteria which will enable more children from the immediate locality to attend. The school enriches village life through communal events such as the summer fete and bonfire night. Communication with parents is excellent and the headteacher's 'open door' policy means they always feel welcome. Parents are full of praise for the school and its staff and they see themselves as working in genuine partnership with the school for the sake of their children. The school also maintains close relationships with the local church and diocese. The headteacher has a clear understanding of the areas in which the school needs to develop in order to become an outstanding church school, but these have yet to be formalised into an action plan. The school undoubtedly has the leadership capacity to develop even further as a church school.