



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Netherton Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Diocese: Worcester

LA: Dudley

Date of Inspection: 29th January 2014

Date of Last Inspection: 17th December 2008

Schools Unique reference number: 103841

Number on roll: 348

Head teacher: Mr Andrew Rushton

Inspectors name and number: Mrs Susan Helps 300

School context

Netherton Church of England Primary School is a very caring voluntary controlled school with a nursery and toddler group. Although the area the school serves is urban the building is set close to a local nature reserve. The pupils are white British with a mix from many different ethnic groups including a significant Muslim community. The school has links with the local church of St Andrew's and is close to its grounds. The building has been refurbished with considerable investment being directed towards transforming the interior, especially the class rooms, to be bright and welcoming. A forest school and a well maintained outdoor area provides the children with plenty of space to learn and play.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Netherton CE Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The school has emerged from a very challenging period and, through inspirational leadership, the head teacher and his team have completely changed the ethos by working with staff, parents, governors, and children to select the core Christian values that 'permeate school life'.
- At every level the school strives to help each individual achieve 'their very best'. Children who may have failed in other settings or whose behaviour is challenging are welcomed and through the 'love and care' shown towards them by all members of the staff team they are 'transformed'.
- There is high level of investment in personalised provision for SEN children as well as in music and the arts with an 'irresistible' curriculum that 'inspires' children and parents.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is 'outward looking' and all stakeholders have a voice that informs school developments.
- Collective worship is relevant to all the children. It is led by senior leaders, teachers, children and members of the church community and is firmly rooted in knowledge of the Bible as well as the importance of prayer and reflection.

Areas to improve

- Embed the changes from the new agreed syllabus into the religious education (RE) curriculum to extend its impact on the children's spiritual development.
- Extend across the curriculum and within worship a shared understanding of spirituality.
- Continue to work with the children's Church Team to provide opportunities for planning and leading worship and to learn more about Anglican traditions.

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

The head-teacher and his leadership team have driven forward the school improvement agenda with persistence and determination. Children with special educational needs and children receiving free school meals achieve as well as other pupils because of the investment of resources, time and patience, a daily manifestation of the school's Christian values in action. The values of perseverance and positivity are demonstrated in the hard work of all the staff, and parents recognise the care and effort taken to 'give the children that extra push'. As a result of this hard work the school trends in core subjects are on an upward trajectory. A Year Six pupil acknowledged that 'our teachers want us to get high grades so we will do well when we go the high school' thus fulfilling the school's ambition for him. Additional members of staff are deployed to support the children emotionally, with a learning mentor who is also a trained counsellor available to support children and parents who are unable to access support through other services. The school has achieved notable improvements in attendance and punctuality rates and parents value the morning routine because 'it makes for a calm start to the day where every child is welcomed by name'. Members of the Parochial Church Council support the children through generous donations that subsidise school trips and they have recently purchased Bibles for the children to have in class. The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development provides excellent opportunities for the children to explore the world beyond their local neighbourhood with visits to the theatre, museums and the Sea Life Centre. The intention is that the children are more outward looking than might usually be the case and that they aspire to travel and visit new environments. An article in the parish magazine reflected on the impact a visit to London had on children during the previous academic year and described how this experience had 'deepened and broadened the children's cultural experience', ensuring children from families who may not have the resources for such a trip could still take part. Music has a high profile in the school with the main school budget used for music tuition thus ensuring all children can learn a musical instrument whatever their circumstances. Music is also used to set the mood for worship and in a Year Three RE lesson music was used to manage the 'working noise' as the children recorded their ideas thus establishing a spiritual dimension to the lesson. The arts are highly valued and the school environment is rich in beautifully crafted displays that 'proclaim' the school's Christian character. The mission statement, the school creed, the values and how these are interpreted by the children along with a variety of crosses and other Christian symbols, some of which have been created by parents, reflect very clearly the importance the school's Christian character to the community. The school through carefully planned staff training is establishing a shared understanding of how to develop spirituality. The children are becoming aware of a spiritual dimension within school worship with two Year Four girls being able to reflect on the calm they felt after leaving assembly. The children are encouraged to take on responsibilities and they value the rewards that acknowledge personal effort. Children nominate classmates for the Good Samaritan awards and the praise assembly marks the achievements of many different children. Parents value the opportunity to come in to worship to see their children receive awards for reading and they support the school when 'Inspire' workshops are arranged to enable them to help their children with curricula activities. The outcome is that an increasing number of parents are drawn into the school, understand its values and appreciate the ethos.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

Children value assemblies as a time to come together as a 'family'; a Year Five pupil reported that 'everyone belongs, regardless of who you are.' Worship is carefully planned and the collective worship leader has established clear guidelines in a policy that is understood and implemented by all the staff. Teachers use the Values for Life scheme and the messages of whole school worship are reinforced in class based sessions. The impact of this is that children demonstrate the identified Christian values in their behaviour, actions and relationships. A member of staff commented on the generosity of children in supporting charities such as Help for Heroes, Children in Need and Breast Cancer describing how 'children with so little are willing to give so much.' Children value the Open the Book services that have increased their knowledge of Bible stories and Bible references are recorded in the beautifully presented Book of Worship. Foundation governors and church members comment on the children's enthusiasm for the sessions, with even children from the reception class being able to re-tell a Bible story. The structure of worship which starts with the Lord's Prayer includes a presentation or story,

time for reflection, a hymn and a blessing. The children report that this 'pattern calms them' so that as they leave the hall they feel a 'closeness to God' and a feeling that 'Jesus loves them'. Prayer has an important part to play in school life with children leaving prayers in the special prayer box or writing prayers in RE lessons. As a result of this and other opportunities during the school day, prayer enhances the spiritual dimension of worship and enriches the life of the school as a church school. Worship is regarded positively by all learners with even the youngest children entering and leaving worship in silence, thus creating stillness which is maintained for quiet reflection. Even pupils with challenging behaviour settle quickly and calmly in anticipation of 'something special' about to take place. Children, adults and governors have helped with the self evaluation of this important time in the school day. This self evaluation has led directly to changes in practice and as a result worship is very visual and involves the children. The children value the modern hymns sung during worship and a Year Five child wrote they 'help us feel alive'. The recently formed children's Church Team contributes ideas and suggestions to the 'adult' Church Team to ensure the voices of different groups from the school community shape and evaluate school worship. Governors along with the worship co-ordinator reflect through their reports on worship as it evolves and there is an openness that ensures that ideas of how to develop further will 'bear fruit'.

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

The headteacher, through his ambitious vision that all children should succeed and make progress, has established a school built on a foundation of carefully selected Christian values. He is supported by a hardworking team of leaders, teachers and governors who work to overcome barriers caused by high levels of social and financial deprivation. The quotation 'It takes a village to make a child' was clearly articulated by a mixed group of staff who were all very clear about their role in 'shaping the children' through care, concern, guidance and love. The challenges faced by the school have been overcome through dedication, hard work and a belief that 'every child is special and deserves the very best'. This positivity is valued by parents, who are glowing in their praise for teachers, with one grandparent stating 'you cannot fault the teachers'. The development of the school's Christian distinctiveness has a high profile in the School Development Plan and foundation governors are involved in reviewing this plan ensuring Christian distinctiveness is central to the school's improvement journey. RE and worship have equal status in the school development plan alongside the core subjects of literacy and numeracy. The RE subject leader supports the staff with adjustments to the new agreed syllabus and linking planning to developing spirituality and creating links to other subject areas. Governors carry out learning walks to review developments in RE teaching and they know the school well, understanding that a 'huge amount of work goes on behind the scenes' where 'behaviour is motivated by kindness and thought for others and where peer assessment is kindly carried out in a sensitive fashion.' The parish priest is well known to staff and pupils and he ensures that the church of St Andrews is available to the school for the celebration of the festivals of Easter and Christmas. Parents value visits to the church, which is also used as a valuable resource for RE lessons. A parent reported how much her daughter had enjoyed learning about the baptism service through a visit to the church and a history lesson to mark Remembrance Day which was enhanced by a visit to a memorial in the church yard. The headteacher and senior leaders collaborate with local schools, including some church schools, as well as with Worcester University. The resulting partnerships provide vital support for the school. The views of all stakeholders on the school's 'distinctive Christian character' are sought regularly with 95% of parents feeling their children benefit from being at a church school. This is particularly impressive when a high proportion of the children come from homes where there is 'no faith' recorded on admission records. The school website, documentation, signs and displays explicitly promote the school's Christian status. Honest, well balanced self evaluation means school leaders accurately understand where further development is needed and they understand the need to embed new initiatives thoroughly before 'rushing on.' The staff model excellent supportive relationships where clear communication is understood as a tool for the development of trust and mutual respect.

SIAMS report January 2014 Netherton C.E. (VC) Primary School, Dudley, DY2 0HU