

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### Great Easton Church of England (VA) Primary School

Snow Hill  
Great Easton  
CM6 2DR

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Outstanding

**Current inspection grade:** Good

**Diocese:** Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex

Dates of inspection: 12 November 2015

Date of last inspection: 28 June 2010

School's unique reference number: 115177

Headteacher: Claire Jackman

Inspector's name and number: Debbie Rogan

### School context

Great Easton C of E Primary School has 152 pupils and is smaller than average. It has a much lower than average number of disadvantaged pupils and ethnic minority groups. It is popular with parents and pupils travel from beyond the locality to come to Great Easton. The school is very involved with the local community and the villagers and five local parishes are highly supportive of the school. The headteacher sits on the PCC. The RE leader was new to post in 2015. The headteacher took up post after the previous SIAMS inspection in 2010.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Great Easton VA Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

- The school's strong and well promoted Christian values sit at the heart of all that it does.
- There is a highly developed sense of spirituality and the impact of collective worship is felt beyond the school and built upon throughout the school day.
- RE has a high profile within the school. The quality of teaching is good overall and has many outstanding features.
- The headteacher is a passionate role model for Christian values.

### Areas to improve

- To develop strong and effective systems for formal monitoring so that the good work and the impact felt of current developments is sustained and enhanced further.
- To ensure that all pupils make at least the expected progress in RE by improving teaching and assessment further.
- To ensure that the newly appointed RE leader is supported by governors and leaders and given time and resources to lead the sharing of good practice already in the school as well as developing effective training and development for all staff.
- To develop teaching, curriculum and assessment processes which allow pupils to talk about and understand other world religions as well as they do Christianity.

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

From the school entrance through to the foyer, classrooms and offices the school's Christian values are clear. Children talk about them with clarity and perception. They understand that respect is necessary in order to preserve peace. One very young pupil, when asked what the consequences of not respecting others were, said 'it could lead to fighting'. Older pupils talk about how these Christian values help them in life inside and outside of school. The headteacher and assistant headteacher are strong and confident leaders. They understand the impact of the school's Christian ethos and values and the impact they have on the excellent behaviour and strong relationships evident across the school. In keeping with the school's Christian foundation attendance is above the national average. This is because pupils feel safe and cared for in school. No pupil has been excluded from school in the past three years. This is because the school works effectively with all vulnerable groups: this includes supporting their family well. Pupils attain in line with pupils nationally and over half the pupils reach higher levels of attainment. The school's Christian ethos and vision is very well embedded and impacts positively on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which is outstanding. This is because it is shared across the school and promoted so that it is reinforced at home and in the wider community. The RE curriculum effectively reinforces and supports the school's Christian values. The school has helped pupils develop their awareness of different cultures and world needs since the previous inspection. This includes through charitable fundraising, for example for Water Aid, the Bansang Appeal and Children in Need. Class reflection spaces and a reflection area outside have also been developed. Through RE pupils are aware of a range of different religions and cultures. However, they have a limited understanding of cultural diversity or the similarities and differences between world religions.

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

Worship is valued and has a high profile within the school and is very well led by the headteacher who co-ordinates the programme. The school's Christian values are woven throughout the worship programme and are often then spoken about in RE or reflection time. Bible stories also have a high priority within worship. The impact of worship on the school community is profound and staff and pupils leave worship with a heightened sense of well-being, self-worth, celebration and love. Pupils are appropriately involved in preparing and delivering assemblies. A welcoming tone is set and pupils of different ages work very well together to present worship. During worship pupils and adults are responsive and engaged. Lit lamps are taken from classrooms to the hall for worship and then back out again. These provide an excellent reminder to pupils and adults that worship leads to reflection and actions throughout the day. Worship is planned thoroughly by the headteacher and incumbent. This ensures that Bible stories and school values have a high profile every day. This impacts positively on pupils who for example can talk about how the story of Daniel in the lion's den exemplifies faith and courage. The school follows the Christian year. Anglican practices such as using different coloured cloths at different times of the year are well understood. The school prayer supports a sense of history and children and adults join in with pride and feeling. They channel their prayer into the good work done in service of others through charitable giving. Worship also skilfully celebrates the family of the school linked with the family of Jesus and the three expressions of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The school has a family bowl in which all members of the community put a bead in water and light three candles on top to represent the Trinity supports pupils' understanding of this difficult concept extremely well. The school has a worship council made up of pupils. This supports the headteacher and incumbent very well in planning and delivering the worship programme. A worship book is used to gather suggestions for improving worship. Many ideas have been implemented to improve practice further and place spirituality at the heart of the school. Children talk happily about their opportunities to pray for a range of purposes. As well as saying the school prayer, which is proudly displayed in the hall, they often write their own in response to world events.

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

RE has a high profile in the school. The learning environment and pupils' books evidence that teaching about a range of religions, including Judaism and Hinduism, takes place. Pupils have some basic understanding of key symbols and places of worship but learning about key aspects of other world faiths is not detailed or rigorous enough. Learning about and from Christianity is strong. The school follows the RE syllabus outlined by the Diocese of Chelmsford, appropriately adapted to meet school needs. Teachers apply the same high standards of marking, planning and well-pitched learning to RE as to other subject areas. Standards of attainment in RE are broadly average with some higher attainment and in line with English and mathematics across the school. This means that most pupils make good progress in RE. However, disadvantaged pupil groups do not make as much progress in some year groups. There is in place a very effective self-assessment process for RE. Teachers mark thoroughly and get older pupils to improve their written work by reflecting further. They do this well and this aids accelerated progress for some. Pupils get good feedback and the opportunity to talk things through with each other in lessons. The RE subject leader is new in post since September 2015. She has begun the process of developing a new assessment tracking system for staff to use, including self assessment. However, a formal written action plan which is monitored and evaluated for impact by leaders and governors is not yet used effectively. This means that it is difficult for leaders to track progress and monitor improvements. The RE leader is booked on to training so that she can improve teaching and learning in the school further. However, recent whole school training on religions other than Christianity is limited. Pupils enjoy RE and talk about a range of Bible stories. They talk about 'Jesus as our role model' in how they live their lives. As a result they are able to apply this learning to their own lives and the lives of others. Pupils engage well in learning and offer some thoughtful and perceptive comments orally and in written work. Teaching is consistently good with some elements of outstanding. Units of work are planned well which include visits to places of worship of religions other than Christianity.

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

The headteacher and senior staff are good role models for other staff in their engagement with and care for pupils based on the school's explicit Christian ethos. The sense of joy and celebration of pupils' achievements is immense. The staff live out Christian values. They have set out to build a sense of community which impacts beyond the school. This ensures that pupils have a bigger family, with the core values of the school at heart, to influence them. As a result pupils achieve well because they are safe, confident and have a calm and positive learning ethos in which to learn. Leaders, including governors, are in the early stages of establishing formal systems for monitoring the impact of its Christian ethos on the school. However, informal monitoring, including regular attendance at events, community support and support for staff is effective because as a result Governors know the school well and can feedback views and thoughts to the Headteacher. The chair of governors has a long history of positive relations with the school and leads the governing body well. Governors challenge the school as necessary. The effective financial planning, including of pupil premium funding, indicates good leadership and management of resources. Parents talk about the school 'as a family' and are supportive of its Christian foundation. Strong and mutually beneficial links with the parish church have led some school families to become more involved with the church, including some even taking steps to be baptised. This sense of spirituality and strength in 'building community' is exemplary. An example of this is the headteacher sitting on the parochial church council (PCC) and strong involvement of clergy in school life and work. The school's evaluation of itself as a distinctively Christian school is accurate and strategies employed in the pursuit of improvement have been effective. The issues from the previous inspection have been addressed well. RE and worship meet statutory requirements. However because methods of monitoring are largely informal and not part of an action plan it is difficult to accelerate the rate of progress in the way that the school would like to by tracking impact and planning carefully for developments.