



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Holt Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Gravel
Holt
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 6RA

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Salisbury

Local authority: Wiltshire

Date of inspection: 28 November 2014

Date of last inspection: November 2009

School's unique reference number: 126329

Headteacher: Margaret Harnden

Inspector's name and number: Sally Naish 780

School context

Holt is an expanding primary school serving its local village community. Numbers have increased to 161 and there are building works for two additional classrooms planned to start in January 2015 to accommodate additional pupils. Pupils are mainly White British and the number with additional needs or receiving pupil premium is below average. The school has a joint Anglican United Reformed Church foundation with which it has very close links.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Holt School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian distinctiveness and values are the bedrock of the school and influence all its decisions so that each child feels cared for and valued as a child of God.
- Collective Worship at the heart of the school embeds the school's values permeating explicitly everything that the school does.
- Christian based leadership as well as dedicated staff who are committed to the school's Christian ethos, result in excellent curriculum opportunities and behaviour.
- Outreaching relationships in school and from the churches enable reciprocal support within the local community.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the centrality of the school's values is evidently and explicitly Christian so that the Christian distinctiveness of the school is instantly recognisable to all.
- Give children responsibility to plan and lead acts of worship in order to grow in Christian character and develop leadership skills.

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

The school's Christian character is evident throughout the school with key values linked to scripture. Half termly 'Christian values themes', such as supporting others, link to practical giving. In a shoebox appeal children remember Jesus' command to 'do for one of the least of them'. This is one example of the way the school helps relate Christian values to everyday life. Christian values are also linked to the reward systems so that everything is cohesive. However, although the values are integrally related to Christianity, this is not made clear on the school website. Parents appreciate how they are nurtured and valued as a big family and that the door is always open. They particularly value the links with the churches and the community saying 'there is never a dull week. There is an ethos of love and service which is there all the time'. The school building is used for community events which many staff attend. It is also used for church organised holiday clubs and the support the school gives to these is greatly appreciated by the community. Children feel cared for and supported both by each other and staff. The exhortation from Corinthians to excel forms a key value enabling children to make more than expected progress, close any gaps in learning and achieve very well. Pupils with special educational needs make significantly better progress in comparison to national data. Children are confident to express their views both verbally and in writing because they have interesting lessons and judicious support from staff who have high expectations. This is especially evident in religious education (RE). In a lesson on the relevance of the ten commandments children in Year 5 and 6 were asked to match newspaper headlines and pictures to a commandment and contemplate why those laws have stood the test of time. Parents say that there are many discussions at home about 'life questions' that arise from work in school and value the spiritual opportunities that the children are given. Examples of this in school can be seen in interactive displays such as 'What four questions would you ask God?' Children learn about faiths other than Christianity in RE which explores the diversity of other beliefs and communities at home and abroad.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The central focus of collective worship makes an outstanding contribution to children's Christian development. It is rooted in scripture and supported practically and spiritually by inspirational leadership of both founding churches. Worship is varied, well-resourced and focuses on living out Christian values. Children particularly enjoy taking part in 'Open the Book' worship led by members of the churches. As an example of excellent practice the end of each 'value theme' culminates in an extended worship to which each class contributes. In the theme 'supporting others' children are reminded of Biblical characters who stuck together whatever the cost and that Jesus gave his life for us. Children reflect that true friendship means giving yourself to others, and ask how we can use these stories to help us become better friends. Children also value termly half day extended assemblies which are partly in church and continue in school with all staff taking an active part. They focus on themes such as Easter or Journeys, which children say help them to work out 'big questions'. Parents value being invited into all collective worship and have opportunities to express their views. They appreciate receiving cards from teachers posted home when children have achieved 20 'value' stars. Although worship focuses on Jesus Christ, children are not clear about the Trinity and aspects of worship such as the Eucharist. Children have not been given the responsibility to plan and leads acts of worship themselves, but are keen to take up the challenge. The children use the Lord's Prayer and there are class books of prayers which are used for worship. However, there are fewer opportunities for children to write their own prayers or pray spontaneously which limits the use of prayer and reflection as part of their spiritual journey. Careful questioning and time for reflection in lessons help to develop their spirituality, a focus for development from the last inspection. The building of a spiritual garden has been postponed due to the siting of new classrooms but this is planned to start in January 2015.

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

All leaders actively promote the school's Christian vision and values so that they are rooted in and permeate the everyday life of the school. This has very positive effects on behaviour and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as well as ensuring that children achieve their potential. Behaviour and attendance are excellent and there have been no exclusions since the last inspection. Parents describe the headteacher as 'always available; fully involved in our emotional needs'. They say that she always elicits feedback to make improvements. The school's expansion is affecting the use of space and the building of two new classrooms is imminent. New members of staff are inducted into the strong Christian ethos and this, with support from colleagues, has an effective impact on transition. Parents also assert that that staff changes are well managed and that teaching assistants provide a 'consistent force. It is clear there are very good working relationships'. Staff as well as children are nurtured and supported by the headteacher to develop new skills and take on responsibilities. The new RE coordinator's enthusiasm and dedication is resulting in highly effective practice in RE. The school is also supported in the teaching of RE and delivery of collective worship by an inspirational and dedicated minister who is also a foundation governor. RE and collective worship are monitored and evaluated both formally and informally by governors, staff and children in class discussion and in school council. The school's involvement in the local community is exemplary and wide ranging. In one example the school hosted part of the Remembrance Day commemorations. Children who had been studying World War I displayed their research on the lives of some of the Fallen whose names were recorded on the local war memorial. As a result of this close relationship almost all local children attend the school. The school council supports a variety of charities both locally and in the Sudan through diocesan and local links. This enhances children's leadership skills and helps develop awareness and empathy for less fortunate communities. Governors and staff monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school as a church school and constantly seek to improve practice.

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