



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

### Little Houghton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Lodge Close  
Little Houghton  
Northampton  
NN7 1AF

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Peterborough**

Local authority: Northamptonshire

Date of inspection: 25 May 2016

Date of last inspection: July 2011

School's unique reference number: 122025

Headteacher: Carolyn Fairbrother

Inspector's name and number: John Weaver 402

#### School context

The school serves the villages of Great and Little Houghton, on the eastern fringe of Northampton. It is smaller than the average primary school, with 86 pupils on roll. The number of pupils receiving free school meals is below the national average. About half of the pupils are brought in from Northampton. Most pupils are of white British heritage. The numbers on the special educational needs register are below the national average. The current head teacher has been in post since 2012.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Little Houghton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary school as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Distinctively Christian values at the centre of this school's life have a very strong influence on pupils' behaviour, attitude to their work and each other.
- The emphasis on the importance of prayer and reflection ensures that the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is outstanding.
- Governors are wholly committed to the school's development as a church school, ensuring that Christian distinctiveness impacts on all areas of the school life.
- Outstanding collective worship strongly supports all stakeholders' spiritual development.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure that in the teaching of religious education (RE) the pupils are enabled to make equal progress in both attainment targets.
- Formalise the school's definition of spirituality so that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the school's aims in this area.

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

Distinctive Christian values firmly underpin this school. They have a very strong impact on the children's behaviour, attitudes and achievement. The children readily cite biblical stories which illuminate the school values. They live out the values constantly in school and outside. One parent comment exemplifies this, 'The way the children apply the values often brings us up short at home'. All staff model the school's Christian values very well. This ensures that behaviour and relationships are outstanding. The application of Christian values is always at the forefront of pupils' attitudes to themselves, their work and the needs of others. Bullying is rare. When incidences of poor behaviour occur, the children themselves know how to resolve them, sometimes without adult intervention. Christian values inform the children's academic progress. Vulnerable pupils particularly are motivated and helped by adults and other children. The majority of them meet national expectations through making accelerated progress due to the Christian nurture they receive. Attendance, well above the national average, shows the pupils' enthusiasm for coming to school. There have been no exclusions. An emphasis on the value of prayer and reflection permeates the school, leading to outstanding SMSC development. As a result pupils' spiritual development is very well supported through the daily prayer life of the school. The high priority given to RE within the curriculum as a whole contributes significantly to the school's Christian character. The school is situated in a predominantly white British community. However, the children have developed a good understanding of, and respect for, communities from other heritages and religions. This is because good work in RE has enabled them to have first-hand experience of cultural diversity. The school's long-established link with a pupil in Uganda gives them an understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world religion. Similarly, their work in supporting initiatives from Christian Aid and charitable causes makes a good contribution to this. The school has identified a need to formalise its definition of spirituality so that all stakeholders clearly understand the aims.

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

Worship is of central importance in this school. A range of stakeholders describe worship as uplifting, exciting, heart-warming. This clearly demonstrates its positive impact on participants. Pupils say that worship is one of the key ways through which the school's Christian values are taught. Each value forms the overriding focus of worship each term. Through this the pupils learn the biblical basis of each value. Worship is distinctively Christian, and the Anglican calendar forms a central part of termly worship planning. As a consequence the pupils generally have a good knowledge and understanding of the Anglican church year. Pupils have a good age-appropriate understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They write their own prayers with confidence, due to continuous encouragement and practice. Their prayers are used throughout the school day as well as in worship. Pupils' prayers are retained in books for children to use on later occasions. This emphasises the importance of prayer in the school's daily life. 'Prayer space' activities are voluntary, but over three quarters of pupils choose to attend. These experiences make a powerful contribution to the pupils' development of a personal spirituality. One pupil commented, 'You have talked over what you're doing with God'. Pupil-led worship is a strength of the school. Every pupil is involved in some way, and the older pupils happily take responsibility for preparing material with minimal help from staff. Observation records show the strong impact of this worship on pupils. The variety of adult leadership, including the vicar, ensures that worship is firmly rooted in the teaching of Jesus. The governors' Faith Committee, staff and pupils systematically monitor the impact of collective worship. This has been effective in securing improvement.

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

Pupils enjoy RE. Their parents say they often re-tell Bible stories at home. Some of the very

youngest pupils are able to use words such as 'faith' correctly. The older pupils say they, 'Get big questions to answer'. They are challenged in lessons to justify their responses. This ensures that by the time they reach year 6, many are very articulate when dealing with questions posed by the teacher and other pupils. Standards in RE are generally in line with those in the other core subjects. These are usually above the national average although variations between cohorts are often due to smaller numbers in some years. RE is not yet outstanding. Pupils have a good understanding of religion and belief systems. However, their experience of evaluating and reflecting on these is not as secure. The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good overall, with some outstanding practice being noted. Pupils' books and work on display shows that they take pride in what they do. Marking is affirmative, with improvement being secured through one-to-one verbal feedback. The school has adopted the Northamptonshire Agreed Syllabus for RE. This ensures that the balance between the teaching of Christianity and other world religions is maintained. Pupils have a secure knowledge of key aspects of Christianity, such as the teachings of Jesus and examples of Christianity in action. Their knowledge of other world faiths is good. This is because they have benefited from visits to places of worship such as the Wellingborough Mandir. Visitors from other world faiths also provide valuable first-hand experience, enabling them to be secure in their understanding. The RE leader is proactive in ensuring that the high profile of RE in the school is maintained. The subject is well-led. Governors ensure that monitoring and evaluation of RE leads to improvement.

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

School leaders express an explicit Christian vision through the ethos statement they have adopted. This states, 'We promote a personal responsibility and good citizenship, and develop high behavioural and moral standards based on the teachings of Jesus Christ'. There is a clear correlation between the rising standards of achievement and the underpinning of Christian values. There has been outstanding progress in addressing all three areas for improvement from the previous inspection. The leadership of the head teacher is paramount in this, and she is well supported by staff and governors. Many parents cite the school's Christian ethos as a reason for choosing the school. Parents value greatly the ways in which they feel they are partners with the school. In addition, villagers, many of whom have no direct connection with the school, are appreciative of the ways in which they are included in school events. The resultant high level of support for the school from the local community makes a significant impact on the pupils' social and cultural development. Leaders and governors use systematic evaluation, monitoring and action followed by further evaluation to ensure the impact of their Christian vision for the school. Continuing professional development is effective in developing members of staff for the future leadership of church schools. The recent award of the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership to the RE leader exemplifies this. The decision to work towards the RE quality mark shows the leadership's commitment to school improvement. Arrangements for RE and collective worship exceed statutory requirements. The effective partnership with St. Mary's Church contributes well to the children's understanding and experience of the Anglican church. As a result the children's participation in the church's family services has increased, with mutual benefits to both. Diocesan support, particularly through training and development, has enabled both staff and governors to sharpen their focus on the leadership and management of the school as church school.