



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

### **Ashford Church of England Primary School**

School Road, Ashford, TW15 2BW

**Diocese: London**

Local authority: Surrey

Dates of inspection: 31 January 2014

Date of last inspection: 13 January 2010

School's unique reference number: 125228

Headteacher: Caroline Dyer

Inspector's name and number: John Viner (NS144)

#### **School context**

Ashford Church of England Primary School is a large primary school located in the parish of St Matthew's Ashford and also serving the parishes of St Hilda's Ashford and St Saviour's Sunbury. Its 413 pupils are drawn mainly from the local area. The majority are White British and an increasing proportion is from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Few speak English as an additional language. There is a lower than average number of pupils with special educational needs. About a third of pupils attend church. The last Ofsted inspection judged the school to require improvement but standards at the end of Year 6 are now above national expectations.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ashford Primary School as a Church of England school are good**

- The headteacher, governors and key staff articulate a clear, ambitious Christian vision for the school that is driving improvement, raising standards and defining its distinctiveness. Pupils' good personal development ensures they are ready to move onto the next stage of their education with a firm foundation, rooted in the values that the school promotes.
- Religious Education (RE) is well led by a knowledgeable coordinator who is ensuring that it reflects the high expectations of a Church School.
- Children know that collective worship and prayer are important aspects of school life.

#### **Areas to improve**

- More distinctive articulation in collective worship about Anglican beliefs and practices, which underpin the school's values.
- Recognising the changing demography of the school by better promoting pupils' attitudes of tolerance, respect and understanding of other faiths.

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

Deeply held Christian values are the core of the school; underpinning its life and defining its purpose. Governors and staff recently re-affirmed the shared values that they promote, marking another step in the school's accelerating progress as a place where its Christian character is recognised by all stakeholders. Parents and pupils understand that it is this distinctiveness that makes the school special. They see this in the good relationships between and among adults and

pupils and in the way that the school discharges its responsibilities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are promoted effectively, although their understanding of the place of Christianity in a diverse society is not as clear as it might be. Because they feel safe, valued and special, pupils behave well, they enjoy coming to school and attendance is improving. The school is successfully raising standards in all aspects of the curriculum, as shown by the rapid rise in pupils' performance. This process is strongly supported by pupils' understanding of the personal importance of religious education. This gives them a confidence to explore deep questions, to become reflective and independent people and so build strong foundations for their lives.

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

Collective worship is central to every school day and different daily patterns of worship keep it fresh and interesting. The programme of planned themes and much greater pupil engagement are improvements since the last inspection. When a pupil commented that 'we used to have assemblies but collective worship is so much better', he was reflecting the shared sense that this is a meeting place for the school family to celebrate the bond of faith, irrespective of belief. Pupils appreciate that they now meet weekly as a whole school and said their teachers had noted how tenderly older pupils cared for younger. Through worship pupils learn to value and understand the Bible. They have a developing idea that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but this is not promoted as clearly as it could be. A candle is lit to start worship but it does not always make it clear that this is a special time for quiet and reflection in an Anglican tradition. The range of different leaders ensures that worship is stimulating and often thought-provoking. Prayer is a pivotal part of school life and pupils value it. Many comment that they like talking to God. Very good, regular use is made of the 'prayer tree' by both pupils and adults who appreciate this opportunity to reflect and respond in a deeply personal way.

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

Religious education (RE) is given a high profile. It is well-led by a knowledgeable coordinator who, with the headteacher, has reviewed the syllabus to meet the needs of the school. Standards are in line with other core subjects and national expectations. Pupils take care in their work; they particularly value the RE diary, kept by all classes as a record of their learning from religion. Each class has a reflection area, often linked to learning in RE. Good systems for assessment ensure that teachers can accurately support pupils' progress so that it is good. Pupils say that they enjoy RE because their teachers make it fun. Most RE teaching is good and sometimes it is outstanding. The best teaching is carefully planned to engage pupils' higher thinking skills and give them the chance to reflect on deep questions that help their discovery of meaning and purpose. As a result, pupils of all faiths develop a good understanding of Christianity and knowledge of the Bible. They like the opportunities to learn about other faiths but their understanding is sometimes limited and they do not necessarily relate it to their cultural development.

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

The headteacher and key staff are a successful team whose Christian leadership is inspirational. Working in partnership with effective governors, the diocese and an outstanding school, they are leading a fast pace of change that is rapidly improving the school. Their clear Christian vision is determined and ambitious and is reflected in the school's future plans. They understand the school's staffing and leadership needs and move rapidly to meet them. Staff are well supported and benefit from clear professional direction. Leaders and governors know the school well and are building strong relationships with parents and the community. Parents are welcomed and supported. They recognise the recent improvement, support the headteacher and trust her judgements. The recently formed parents' prayer group is a measure of their commitment. Strong relationships are being forged with the three parishes that the school serves and with other local Christian faith communities. The school is well placed for further improvement.