



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Meppershall CE Academy

107 High Street
Meppershall
Shefford
SG17 5LZ

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese:

Local authority: N/A
Dates of inspection: 11 November 2015
Date of last inspection: 16 November 2010
School's unique reference number: 109620
Headteacher: Nickie Moore
Inspector's name and number: Shirley Whales 830

School context

Meppershall CE Academy is a small school serving the village of Meppershall and the local area. The school has experienced some difficult times following several changes in senior leadership and the current headteacher has been in post for less than two years. There are 5 classes accommodating a rising intake. Most children are from a White British background and the attainment of pupils is good overall.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Meppershall CE Academy as a Church of England school are good

- The dedication of the headteacher, school staff and governors to provide a safe and inclusive education, based on Christian values, underpins the very good relationships between all members of the school community.
- The distinctively Christian ethos informs the care and nurture of pupils' wellbeing and has a positive impact on their achievement.
- School leaders are strongly committed to the future developments of the school's distinctive Christian character.

Areas to improve

- Raise the quality of opportunities for pupils to explore their spiritual awareness by providing them with prayer and reflection spaces that encourage deeper questions, which have a more profound sense of purpose and meaning.
- Staff and governors should work together to accelerate the progress of all pupils in religious education (RE) by routinely and systematically reviewing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Develop a clear understanding of the difference and diversity within the Anglican tradition across the world and with other faiths so that pupils are supported in their appreciation of Christianity as a multi-cultural, world-wide faith.

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

School staff, governors and members of the school community support the Christian ethos of the school; pupils are 'loved' and cared for, which enables them to use their 'God given abilities'. Pupils feel safe to learn and are happy to be in school. As a consequence, attendance is good; monthly monitoring and conversations with parents and carers are having a positive impact. School values are becoming embedded; these are articulated convincingly by the pupils and impact on their daily lives. Parents explain how the school provides pupils with a 'moral compass'. The school values system is supported by Bible passages and discrete teaching through specially themed whole school RE days. This gives pupils an opportunity to explore key religious concepts using a cross-curricular approach to learning. Monthly values are mentioned in the school newsletter and activities for parents and carers to share with their children are made available on the school website. Pupils' spiritual development has been enhanced through Pop Up Prayer Spaces; these opportunities enable pupils to express their thoughts confidently and encourage them to ask and reflect upon big questions. However, the quality and accessibility of spaces in the classroom environment for reflection and prayer is not consistently good. The school is beginning to establish links with other faith communities and pupils' understanding of respecting difference is developing well. During a recent visit to the Faith Tour, one Year 4 pupil recounted how it helped him to be, 'tolerant to others who aren't Christian'. Whilst some individual and commendable efforts to raise awareness of world-wide faiths and traditions such as War Child have had some impact on pupils' understanding of diversity, multi-cultural society, world-wide links have not yet been established. Pupils are able to link the Christian values to their learning in RE; this contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and as a result influences the overall promotion of the Christian ethos.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The headteacher, in consultation with Revd. Roni, plans collective worship around the monthly Christian values, key Bible stories and diocesan materials. Revd. Roni also helps to teach difficult concepts such as the Trinity and as a result pupils are beginning to have an age-appropriate understanding of its significance within Christian tradition. Collective worship is therefore distinctively Christian with Jesus at the centre. The variety of content and leadership supports an appealing mix of worship experiences for the pupils. Visits from Methodist and Baptist ministers further enhance the sense of community and breadth of worship generally. Pupils see worship as an important part of the day; they speak of a sense of unity and enjoy being together 'when it is quiet'. Pupils provide appropriate answers to biblical questions and they participate willingly in prayer and music. Whilst pupils are enjoying the increasing involvement in leading collective worship, which helps them to gain a better understanding of Anglican liturgy and the Christian traditions, their responsibility for planning worship is still in its early stages of development. Pupils are at ease with prayer at different times of the day; they are beginning to understand the purpose of prayer and reflect on their own experiences: 'We say sorry to God and ask God for our help'. Personal spiritual development is enhanced with the use of the Christian values in class teaching; one Year 1 child wrote, 'Peace is the colour of the clouds'. Parents are given opportunities to engage with worship and speak of the links to 'Christian morals and values, which are extremely important for children to grow into positive, accepting and caring individuals.' Staff, governors and clergy are beginning to evaluate collective worship on a regular basis, often involving pupils and parents. This is having a positive impact on the improvements required and influences future developments.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE is viewed as a core subject at Meppershall. Lessons engage and motivate pupils using a variety of interesting activities, such as drama, music and decision-making. These teaching methods are starting to enable the pupils to develop a 'deeper level of thinking' and encourage questions.

Pupils have benefitted from using a range of resources and artefacts that support their learning and visits to different places of worship are starting to have an impact on their cultural development. Pupils enjoy RE and say that it is important to them. The programme of visits and visitors is becoming stronger and as a result pupils are gaining a deeper understanding of key aspects of not only the Christian faith from different points of view but also of other faiths and traditions. There is a very good balance between learning about religions and opportunities for personal reflection on what this learning means to them. The school's Christian values have played an important part in reinforcing this learning. 'We learned about The Good Samaritan and it taught us how to love everyone even if we don't like them'. The subject leader is beginning to identify areas for improvement in RE. She is using her expertise to develop good systems and practices in order to support other members of staff. Pupils' written work is inconsistent and their targets for progress have not yet been fully implemented. This means that pupils are not always involved in evaluating the quality of their work and not all are aware of their next steps for learning. There is, however, a clear assessment process in place. Class teachers use a range of pupils' work to moderate standards using the eight level scale. This provides a current interpretation of pupils' attainment. The subject leader now has plans to track pupils' progress more rigorously so that a clearer picture of achievement can determine an informed view of standards and expectations over time.

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

Despite many changes in leadership since the last inspection, the current headteacher and governors have articulated a clear Christian vision through the school's strapline, 'Love for God, Life, Learning and for Each Other'. They model school's Christian values effectively so that the school's Christian foundation is now regularly celebrated and secured. The impact of these values is seen in pupils' worthy academic achievements and personal development. They also help pupils behave well in lessons and support good attitudes to learning. Self-evaluation strategies are opening up new opportunities in the school's development planning process; clearly identified actions are concentrated on driving improvements and raising the profile of Christian distinctiveness across the school. The focus on RE is a high priority and school leaders recognise that further improvements are required in order for the school to be outstanding. This is an issue from the previous inspection which has not been fully addressed, along with the other key areas for improvement. Pupils enjoy a creative curriculum and teachers use a variety of media to enthuse and encourage pupils to explore and enrich their learning and understanding of the school's Christian values. During a Key Stage 1 lesson about 'Peace', pupils listen and compare two different pieces of music: Tchaikovsky's 1812 overture and a piano concerto by Mozart. This is linked effectively to the Bible story of 'Jesus calming the storm'. The school appreciates the strong relationships it shares with parents and in turn parents say that a more overt emphasis on the Christian ethos has encouraged their children to use the values at home. A recent feedback letter states a parent's view, 'My child is able to express his love for God in numerous ways'. The local church contributes to effective relationships within the village community and organises many activities. This includes a very popular 'church holiday club' which provides a valuable link with families and also benefits them during the summer break. Pupils' awareness of national and global communities is established through cross curricular learning opportunities and the school has plans to cultivate these experiences by building multi-cultural links so that a deeper understanding of world-wide faith and tradition is generated. The school is supported effectively by the diocese and the professional development of staff is a high priority with training specifically linked to church school development. The arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

SIAMS report November 2015 Meppershall CE Academy, Meppershall, Shefford SG17 5LZ