



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Acton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Lambert Drive
Acton
Suffolk CO10 0US

Diocese: St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Local authority: Suffolk

Dates of inspection: 1 March 2016

Date of last inspection: March 2011

School's unique reference number: 124686

Headteacher: Julie O'Neill

Inspector's name and number: Gillian Holmes 849

School context

Acton school completed the process of Local Authority reorganisation in 2013 and now takes pupils to Year 6. It is situated in the village from which about half its children come; the other children come from out of catchment. The majority of pupils have a White-British heritage. The headteacher has been in post for five years.

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

- Excellent links with the church, the community and the Diocese are used to strengthen the school's Christian ethos: these contribute very well to pupils' strong spiritual development.
- Christian values are both explicit and implicit throughout the school and impact positively on pupils' educational experience.
- The involvement of pupils in planning and leading worship with the creation of the Faith Council has significantly raised the profile of worship.
- The creative curriculum provides opportunities for all pupils to develop a greater spiritual awareness.

Areas to improve

- Build in regular times of reflection for staff and governors to ensure that the impact of evaluation on the development of the school as a church school continues to underpin practice.
- Continue to develop the network of visitors into school from faith communities and plan interesting visits to further deepen pupils' understanding of multi-culturalism.

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

The school is committed to, and successful in, providing high quality Christian education for all pupils. Its Christian ethos is underpinned by twelve Christian values. They are deeply embedded in everything the school does. Pupils and staff rightly attribute the excellent behaviour to the importance of these Christian values. Pupils understand the roots of the values and can clearly explain the relevance of each value to themselves and their learning in school. The relationships between staff and pupils, staff and parents, and between pupils is outstanding. Incidents of bullying are few and far between but are dealt with swiftly and fairly, in keeping with the school's Christian ethos and the behaviour policy. The recent appointment of a Parent/Partnership Adviser has provided excellent support for vulnerable pupils and their families. This has made a positive impact upon the progress of these pupils. Pupils enjoy coming to school and so attendance is excellent and there have been no exclusions. Pupils achieve well and progress is rising across the school. The school is working hard to support the small number of pupils who are underperforming. There is a clear emphasis placed on how RE enhances the school's Christian distinctiveness. Pupils are excited and challenged by RE which helps to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Visits from members of different faith communities, contribute to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development opportunities. Every child in the school is acknowledged as a special child of God. Parents and pupils praise the inclusivity of the school, where every child has access to both the full curriculum as well as the extra-curricular activities. The school justly prides itself on its creative curriculum which contributes to pupils' spiritual development. Pupils have been involved in a number of musical events and art projects both at the Cathedral and at other events in the County. The high standard of creativity throughout the school exemplifies the focus on the whole child's spiritual development. The school grounds have been sympathetically developed to enhance the curriculum. They provide quiet areas for reflection in the 'secret garden'. Focussing on the wider community, the active School Council organises fun ways to raise money for a range of charities throughout the year. The school also supports a school in Uganda, through writing to the children and raising money. This contributes to pupils' growing understanding of diversity, difference, compassion and service.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Pupils speak positively about worship which is central to the life of the school. This is recognised by parents and governors. All teachers take a part in planning and leading worship along with the vicar and the church's ministry team. Prayerful and meaningful worship takes place with a focus on Christian values and biblical teaching. It impacts positively on all aspects of the life of the school, to pupils' very good spiritual and moral development and to enhancing the school's Christian distinctiveness. Pupils' involvement in leading worship is considerable. The Faith Council comprises of a group of pupils, who with the support of the vicar during the planning stage, confidently lead worship regularly. Worship is lively, inspirational and greatly enjoyed by all pupils. The Bible is used to illustrate the Christian values and pupils encouraged to reflect on the application of what they have heard. Prayer has a central place in school life; consequently pupils understand the importance of prayer. All pupils are encouraged to write prayers and attach them to a prayer tree. These prayers are shared in worship and used for quiet reflection. Pupils recognise different types of prayer, for example, 'to say thank you for things he gives us', 'to ask him to help other people' and 'to ask God to help us be good and to do the right thing'. Pupils are able to reflect, in age-appropriate ways, on Christian ideas about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is an excellent relationship between the church and the school. The vicar with the lay reader leads worship each week. They have ensured that pupils are aware of Anglican practices including the seasons of the church's year. The use of the local church at festival times and for end of term services enhances the worship programme significantly. Very effective monitoring, which includes listening to pupils' views, is undertaken by the headteacher and the vicar and is shared with all staff and governors. This ensures the ongoing effectiveness of worship. This contributes to its pivotal role in developing

the Christian ethos of the school.

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

The supportive Christian family community has been created through the determined commitment of all the staff and governors. Support and training from the Diocese for governors has resulted in rigorous self-evaluation and increased understanding of their role in supporting the school's Christian ethos. They now work very effectively as strategic partners in shaping the Christian identity of the school. Self-evaluation is used confidently to monitor and inform a culture of ongoing improvement. The distributed leadership of RE and worship, supported by the Diocese, has also contributed significantly to the school's Christian ethos and to succession planning and training for current and future leaders in a church school. Arrangements for RE and worship meet statutory requirements. The whole curriculum is underpinned by a Christian vision for education; 'the school seeks in partnership with parents, to be a place of excellence where young people are given the best possible opportunities for learning within a supportive caring community, upholding Christian values'. The school has an 'open door' policy, parents are kept well informed and the website is used effectively for information. One section of the website focuses on the values and how they can be integrated into home life as well as school. The values are understood by all stakeholders and positively impact on every aspect of the school. The excellent links with the village church deeply enhances school and parish life. Joint activities between the school and the church help pupils to learn about their place in their faith community. The involvement of the vicar has been pivotal in the positive development of the school's Christian distinctiveness. Members of the Parochial Church Council are also involved in the life of the school through frequent visits and supporting charity fund-raising events. Discussion and prayer at their meetings is evidence of the church's commitment to work in partnership with the school.

SIAMS report March 2016 Acton CE (VC) Primary School, Acton. CO10 0US.