



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Wigley Bush Lane
South Weald
Brentwood
Essex
CM14 5QN

Diocese: Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex

Date of inspection: 21 October 2014

Date of last inspection: 23 September 2009

School's unique reference number: 115164

Headteacher: Iain Gunn

Inspector's name and number: Lizzie McWhirter MA 244

School context

St Peter's Primary School serves a community in South Weald on the western edge of Brentwood. Currently there are 320 pupils on roll, who are mostly from a White British background. 7% of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. St Peter's is very proud of its links with St Peter's Church. The headteacher has been in post for seven years and has built up a strong, committed and stable team around him.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Peter's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The prominence given to servant leadership throughout the school, embraced and humbly modelled by the whole staff team in their Christ-like desire to serve others.
- The welcoming and worshipping Christian community which develops positive attitudes amongst its pupils, who become confident, independent learners and achieve highly.
- The mutual and substantial links enjoyed with St Peter's Church, embodying shared Christian values, embraced by everyone, whether or not they belong to a Christian community.

Areas to improve

- Enhance pupil evaluation and ownership of collective worship, thus nurturing their spiritual development and ensuring consistently high quality worship.

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

St Peter's sustains an inspirational and excellently rich, diverse and exciting learning

environment, where pupils are proud to belong, feel valued and achieve highly. This is because of the school's commitment and vision to provide high quality Christian education for all children within a Christian environment which is at the very core of its being. Moreover, all school life and practice is rooted in the school's core values of trust, humble, confident, forgiveness, friendliness, honest, polite, thoughtful, grateful and respectful. As the pupils put it, 'being humble is quite an important one as Jesus was very humble and we should follow him'. Behaviour is exemplary which the school attributes as a direct result of the important messages shared in collective worship of knowing how to treat each other. In this school Christian values are boldly displayed, proclaimed and modelled daily by the whole school community. Learning is aspirational here, not just academic, with St Peter's valuing a wide range of achievement, notably in music and sporting activities. In addition, academic achievement is significantly well above the national average and the culture of learning is always to challenge children, which is done effectively. The standard of teaching is very high across all core subjects, including in religious education [RE]. Half termly progress meetings by teachers ensure tracking and intervention is well embedded. As a result, some pupils achieve Level 5 and 6 in numeracy, literacy and RE. The school takes a very positive approach to attendance which consequently is very good. This is because children are happy and want to come to school, stemming from the Christian ethos, grounded in Christian values and very high expectations. There have been no exclusions. This is because the school works very effectively with families and meets the needs of individual children wherever they can. Pupils experience the Christian values of grateful service and generosity, especially through joint fundraising activities with St Peter's Church, raising incredible amounts of money. Their global awareness is enhanced through multicultural days. Such activities enable pupils to gain an understanding of their place in the community and their responsibility to others, in looking after God's world. Pupils thrive and feel able to make a positive contribution. Excellent examples include the school choir as well as cross country competitions which involve, challenge and engage many junior pupils. In all these ways, St Peter's pupils are able to make a difference as an outward and visible expression of the Christian teaching they receive, nurturing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The attitude of pupils to collective worship is excellent because the quality of worship offered to them is excellent. It makes a real difference in their lives and the lives of their families and contributes greatly to their spiritual development. Parents say the children practice what they learn in collective worship at home. Prayerful and meaningful worship takes place, with a focus on Christian values and Jesus' teaching in the Bible. This is embraced by all staff. Excellent examples include a strong focus on the saints, especially St Peter. Many visual ways involving pupils in worship are used to help them understand the importance of the school's chosen values, building on a firm foundation and working together to uphold them. Worship regularly involves pupils reading from the Bible. St Peter's vicar is a welcome and regular visitor to school, leading worship every Wednesday. An important feature of the worshipping life of St Peter's is the termly Eucharist to celebrate Ash Wednesday, Pentecost and All Saints. Two years ago, pupils chose a new responsive prayer to include in Eucharistic worship. Pupils often sing The Lord's Prayer, speaking of prayer as 'very important. If God did create us, we should spend all of our time talking to him and worshipping him. If we pray, it helps us believe in God and keeps our faith'. Pupils show their understanding of God as Father, Son and Spirit, saying 'The reason Jesus had to die for our sins was so we could be forgiven. Jesus is God in flesh, and only God is perfect. All people have sinned against God, but we can always try and follow the values'. They go on to say that 'the Holy Spirit helped the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to here'. Governors have correctly identified that areas for development include a focus on teaching about the Trinity in order to nurture children's and adults' spiritual development alike. Pupils welcome taking on more of the planning and leading of worship themselves, whether in school or church. Twice yearly pupil surveys are currently used to gather pupils' viewpoints on worship. Consequently, Year 5 and 6 pupils now sit along the

sides of the hall so they can engage more in worship. Children are keen to be more regularly involved in the evaluation of worship, sharing this with governors so 'they can see what's going well and what children want as improvements to make worship better'. One pupil said he 'got to be headteacher for a day and led collective worship'. Governors too welcome such involvement more regularly from the pupils, saying that pupils 'don't ever let us rest'. In all these ways, worship is continually improving in quality and integrity.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The very high standard of the quality of teaching and learning in RE is consistent throughout the school. This is because all staff are committed to creativity, excellence and enjoyment for all pupils. Very well differentiated lessons address such areas as what being loved means as well as considering the meaning of God's commandments, linking them to everyday life and asking what constitutes right actions. Questions include, 'is lying always wrong?' An excellent system of marking is embedded, ensuring pupils know how to improve in their work and 'what extra we have to do to achieve a Level 5'. This is because marking is firmly linked to objectives and next steps. Children are keen to respond to teachers' reflective questions in their books at the start of the next lesson. These books are excellent examples of pupil progress in showing what children have achieved. They also show that pupils can make the link between different faiths and beliefs very well. Books are scrutinised by governors each term at meetings as well as on their regular monitoring visits. RE is very well led and managed by an enthusiastic subject leader. Termly tracking and assessment is well embedded in RE as in other core subjects. As a result, pupils attain very high standards as well as, and in some cases, significantly higher than, in the other core subjects. More importantly, children enjoy their RE, citing their learning about Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity. Pupils demonstrate good theological literacy and their knowledge of the Christian narrative is strong, including the roles of Mary, Jesus and St Peter. They cite their encouragement to be strong like Peter 'the rock'. They go on to say that 'even a martyr is not perfect. We can't always be perfect, but we can try to do the right thing all the time'. Pupils and clergy welcome a time to discuss key Christian concepts and the important questions of faith outside of RE and worship in greater depth, thus nurturing pupils' spiritual development.

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

The school's strong Christian foundation is very effectively and humbly promoted by the vision and dedication of the headteacher and all his staff, together with the clergy and governors. This is because all staff follow Christ's example to serve others and all governors are members of St Peter's Church without exception. The pursuit of excellence in all school activities is high on the agenda, above all providing a community where all children are happy and can thrive and succeed, and where daily worship and challenging and creative RE is highly regarded and meets the statutory requirements. Parents value this school as an inclusive community which surpasses their expectations, 'supporting the whole person' and the wellbeing of all. This is modelled by staff and pupils alike. Parents especially praise the headteacher 'at the helm'. Governors are strongly committed to the school's development plan where church school distinctiveness is a standing item on every governing body agenda. Governors are supportively challenging of the school in their robust and regular meetings. They are committed to the professional development of all the staff, including aspiring headteachers and leaders. Governors too go the extra mile and write to parents every term. The headteacher's daily message on the website keeps parents informed, and as a result, they have confidence in the school. Moreover, St Peter's School is outward looking and has a strong mission to work as a team and serve the local schools in the community, modelling excellence to church and community schools alike. The school is highly regarded by the diocese, leading worship at key events and the church school liaison group meets termly; showing church, school and diocesan links are integral to the life of this school.

