



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church**

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

### Hillhouse Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Hillhouse, Ninefields Estate, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 3EL

**Previous SIAMS grade: outstanding**

**Current inspection grade: good**

**Diocese: Chelmsford**

Local authority: Essex

Dates of inspection: 10 February 2015

Date of last inspection: 8 March 2010

School's unique reference number: 133254

Headteacher: Joanne Willcox

Inspector's name and number: Virginia Corbyn 86

#### School context

Hillhouse Church of England Primary School is a smaller than average primary school which is undergoing a period of expansion. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is below average. The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding (pupil premium) is below average. The current headteacher has led the school through a period of uncertainty over the last three years.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hillhouse as a Church of England school are good

- Pupils and parents speak very highly of relationships at all levels in the school which are clearly defined by the school's Christian values.
- Pupils value worship, articulating the way in which it provides an important start to their learning for the day.
- Leadership is driven by a clear Christian vision and values which have been confidently established and continue to be developed by the current headteacher and her team.

#### Areas to improve

- Complete the journey of embedding Christian values explicitly so that they are as clear in relation to achievement as they are to personal development and wellbeing.
- Ensure that evidence of higher level learning in Religious Education (RE) is secure so that progression in pupils' thinking is thoroughly developed.
- Develop regular, formal systems for monitoring and evaluating the school as a Church school so that the current pace of improvement is maintained.

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

The statement of a parent that 'No child is invisible' summarises the importance of each child at Hillhouse primary school. This focus is based upon a shared understanding that the whole child is to be nurtured in the light of Gospel values. These values are respect, responsibility, wisdom, truth, hope, compassion, fairness and courage. Pupils can articulate how these values guide their attitudes and behaviour on a daily basis. They can link them with stories and teaching from the Bible. This means that pupils' personal development and wellbeing is well understood in relation to the vision and values of the school. Standards and achievement have been rising steadily over the past three years. The progress of individuals and of particular groups is driven by implicit Christian values. Courage enables pupils to try again, knowing that their teachers will support them. Truth in self-assessment supports pupils to be honest about what they need to improve. Such values are not made explicit in most key documentation although they are well embedded in the current behaviour policy. Very strong relationships at all levels, underpinned by Gospel values, are demonstrated by all stakeholders. These are seen as the core component of the success of the school. Regular opportunities for prayer form the foundation of pupils' spiritual development. This includes the creation of distinctively Christian outside spaces for reflection as recommended by the previous inspection. Responsibility for their own actions and an understanding that this will have a positive impact on others guides moral development. Nurture and acceptance of others characterise all social interactions within the school. School leaders actively promote the importance of celebrating being different, including through an interfaith week. This leads to responding to the needs of others locally, nationally and globally. Knowledge and understanding of Christianity is good particularly in relation to Gospel values. Pupils enjoy and are challenged by RE. They are encouraged to ask questions about faith and to explore big questions. However, evaluation and recorded evidence does not reflect the high level of thinking which is apparent in lessons and though discussion with pupils.

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

Collective worship gives the whole school community the space to re-visit its Gospel values and to encounter Jesus. Everyone can reflect upon the potential to demonstrate those values during the day. Pupils are very enthusiastic about worship in school. They describe it as the 'start of our learning', as integral to their learning journey. A pupil who has recently joined the school explained that worship had 'helped her to fit in' because of the sense of community which she feels. Others, including parents and governors, describe the celebration of what each person offers to the community as demonstrating how every person matters. Reflection upon school values is used to help pupils to look outwards to the wider world as well as to support personal spiritual development in meaningful ways. All teachers are involved in the leading of worship. Pupils are moving into leadership roles by offering their own prayers and by leading whole school prayers and responses. Such opportunities are limited although they are significant for the pupils who lead and for those who are led. There is a very good understanding of God as Father and Son, less so of God the Holy Spirit. The celebration of Christian festivals and special occasions is appreciated by pupils and parents as an important part of belonging to a Church school.

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

The headteacher has set high expectations for the whole community, that everyone must both 'talk and walk' the Gospel values. The articulation of these values, therefore, comes across loud and clear, particularly from all leaders in the school. Everyone is expected to set the example of living like Jesus which shows itself in how all adults and pupils behave towards one another. However, this is more explicit in terms of behaviour and attitudes than in relation to achievement. Governors describe a 'Hillhouse pupil' as one in whom the Gospel values are embedded as they move on to secondary education. Parents explain the 'natural' way in which their children embody the values in school and at home. RE is well led and managed. Strong support for the new subject leader has

been given by leaders including the governors. The RE leader has set clear expectations in relation to consistency and progress across the school. She has established a good working relationship with governors. Teachers have responded well to her encouragement and enthusiasm. Leadership at all levels is being grown and nurtured in the distinctive context of the whole Church school. Statutory requirements for worship and RE are met. Partnerships with the church can be seen in practical ways. These include the marking of Christian festivals, the involvement of church members within the school and the regular presence of the incumbent in school. A new Diocesan adviser is in the process of developing a constructive relationship with school leaders. Diocesan training has proved useful in moving the school forward. Community links which enrich learning and build mutually beneficial relationships continue to be forged. Regular and systematic monitoring and evaluation of the school as a Church school is presently underdeveloped.

SIAMS report February 2015 Hillhouse CE Primary School Waltham Abbey Essex EN9 3EL