



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church**



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

### Matching Green Church of England Primary School

Little Laver Road  
Matching Green  
Harlow, Essex  
CM17 0QB

**Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding (1)**

**Current inspection grade: Satisfactory (3)**

**Diocese: Chelmsford**

Local authority: Essex

Date of inspection: 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2015

Date of last inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> February 2010

School's unique reference number: 115126

Headteacher: Lee Bradford

Inspector's name and number: Philip Knowles 795

#### School context

Matching Green Church of England voluntary controlled school is a small village primary school that serves local families. Increasingly, it is drawing in families from further afield. There are currently 75 pupils on roll, the majority are of white British origin. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is below average. At the time of inspection, the headteacher had been in post for only three weeks. His appointment follows an extended period of considerable change to the leadership and teaching staff at the school.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Matching Green Voluntary Controlled school as a Church of England school are satisfactory

The school's new leadership has already taken steps to raise the profile of the school's Christian ethos but it is too early for these to have had the required impact. This is because over the recent, extended period of instability the school's Christian foundation has not been given the required priority it deserves in supporting the academic and personal development of pupils. That said, many elements are in place to ensure the future development of Matching Green as a Church of England school. For example, relationships between the school and the parish church are well established and there is a happy, caring and inclusive environment where importance is placed upon academic achievement. The school's current leadership demonstrates that it has a good capacity to improve.

#### Areas to improve

- Formalise the strategic development and regular monitoring of the school's Christian ethos and values
- Develop the involvement of pupils in planning, leading and evaluating the worship programme
- Establish a permanent quiet area where members of the school community may go during

the school day to pray or reflect

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

Children talk about their school with great enthusiasm, describing it as a friendly place where they enjoy lessons and feel safe. Children achieve well. They say they enjoy learning about religions and saying prayers during assemblies. Parents speak highly of the school. They value the school's designation as a church school because they feel that it serves to encourage high academic expectations and standards of behaviour. They also feel that the school engages particularly well with the surrounding community. The school's recent community activities have included a Macmillan coffee morning and a church and school together day, which indicates that this view, shared by other stakeholders, is well founded. Mutually supportive relationships are evident throughout the school which offers a very encouraging and nurturing environment to all its pupils. However, these are not sufficiently based explicitly on the school's Christian foundation, ethos and values. The new headteacher is working swiftly to raise the profile of the school's Christian character within the school environment. A prominent new display proclaims the school's distinctiveness as well as Christian values such as peace, hope and trust. The symbol of the cross is evident throughout the school. Prayers are said in assemblies, before lunch and some classes say a prayer at the end of the day. However, pupils identify these as times when prayers are said but do not identify the importance of prayer in their lives. The school has areas designated as quiet areas but these are not identified by the children as special places that are set aside for prayer or reflection. Some good teaching in religious education (RE) contributes well to pupils' understanding of world faiths and to their spiritual and moral development. There is also clear evidence of the teaching of implicit Christian values that challenges the children's thinking and contributes to their understanding of key concepts such as compassion and forgiveness.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory**

Worship is currently led by the headteacher, teachers or local ministers, who plan individual acts of collective worship thoroughly. The thoroughness of planning the whole programme of worship is less successful. The headteacher uses Christian values as themes, which are promoted within school. These are beginning to be understood by pupils who speak about them and appreciate the relevance of these to their own lives. The liturgical calendar is recognised through the observance of major Christian festivals. The children enjoy visiting the local church to celebrate these and also during their RE lessons to experience the special atmosphere there. Worship is based around Christian teaching but this is not successfully linked to the school's core Christian values. Pupils are developing an understanding of the importance of Jesus as a spiritual leader but their understanding of the Christian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is underdeveloped.

Worship follows a pattern throughout the week that pupils recognise and can describe. It is enjoyed by the majority of pupils. They enjoy the opportunities they are given to participate in worship. However, opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate worship are underdeveloped. The school community appreciates its celebration assemblies, which contribute effectively to pupils' self-esteem and well-being. Children know The Lord's Prayer and can recite it. They also write and read their own prayers during some acts of worship. A grace, written by pupils, is said as the whole school sits to have lunch together. Symbolism is being used appropriately to help develop an understanding of certain aspects of Anglican tradition. For example, a large cross is in evidence on the front of the worship table. However, opportunities for developing an understanding of certain aspects of liturgy, such as the significance of the liturgical colours, are currently limited.

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

The school has been through a period of instability that has impacted significantly on the ongoing development of its Christian distinctiveness. During this recent challenging time,

governors acted decisively to bring about the change that was needed. In spite of this, the school's interim leadership did not give the development of the school's Christian distinctiveness the priority it needed. Consequently its Christian vision has not been a major driving force for school improvement and development until the new headteacher came into post very recently.

The incumbent's involvement with the school has remained consistently strong and her initiatives such as 'Little Praises' and 'Family Church Service' are a demonstration that the church has made every effort to preserve the school's Christian ethos. However, the development of the school's Christian ethos and values has not been planned strategically over the period of instability. The systematic evaluation of the impact of the distinctive Christian character on the school community is underdeveloped and the outcomes are insufficiently evaluative to effectively influence future strategic planning. The new headteacher has quickly instilled confidence and trust in his leadership. His readiness to articulate his plans to develop the school's Christian vision show that he has a clear understanding of how to raise the profile of the school's Christian ethos.

While RE and collective worship meet legal requirements, the school has distinct plans to develop both areas further, linked to the development of the school's Christian ethos and values. However, these plans have not been implemented or impacted positively on the life of the community.

SIAMS report January 2015 Matching Green Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School CMI7 0QB