



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

The Rackham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Main Street
Witchford
Ely
CB6 2HQ

Diocese: Ely

Local authority: Cambridgeshire

Dates of inspection: 30th June 2014

Date of last inspection: 11th June 2009

School's unique reference number: 110807

Headteacher: Mrs Suzanne Carter

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Caroline Clarke

School context

The Rackham Church of England VC Primary School is a larger than average primary school, serving the village of Witchford and the surrounding area. The school has strong links with its parish church, which is very close to the school. Most children are of White British origin, and the proportion of children with special educational needs and disabilities is average. Very few pupils are eligible for pupil premium and the school meets the government's current floor standards for attainment and progress. The Headteacher, incumbent, chair and governors have worked in close partnership for several years. The school currently has vacancies for all its foundation governor positions.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Rackham as a Church of England school are good.

- The Christian vision and values, at the very heart of all the school does, are lived out in practice by the whole school community. This has a clear and positive influence on pupils' values, attitudes, ability to think deeply and their behaviour.
- The progress and development that has taken place since the last inspection is clearly seen in school evidence, the school building and interviews with staff, governors and pupils.
- This is a positive, caring, inclusive school community where all pupils are nurtured and encouraged to be reflective learners, resulting in a deeper understanding of themselves, others and situations.
- The vibrant, inviting and spiritually enriching learning environment clearly imparts and embeds the Christian vision and values of the school, ensuring these are overt and are used daily by all members of the school community.
- Outstanding pupil behaviour demonstrates the high levels of respect pupils have for one another and the community in which they learn.
- The support and care for pupils and staff is excellent and the school is proud of its Christian

identity, as can be seen by detailed displays containing Christian artefacts and pupils' work.

Areas to improve

- Recruit and support foundation governors in strengthening the relationship between the school and its parish, in order to further develop the Christian leadership of the school.
- For teaching staff and pupils of all ages to become more involved in the planning and leading of individual acts of worship, in order to deepen their understanding and confidence.
- Further develop and embed the links between collective worship and classroom practice, to ensure that Christian teaching is integral to all aspects of school life.
- Provide further opportunities, in partnership with parents, to celebrate and explore the school's spirituality and Christian ethos, in order to deepen the shared understanding of Christian values in practice.

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

The school's Christian ethos underpins every aspect of school life, meaning pupils are aware of the significance of faith within their school. One of several examples, is a display showing paintings and pupils' thoughts about love. It explains that the Holy Spirit guides Christians by helping them to show love to one another.

Classroom opportunities pupils have to share and reflect on Christian teachings impact positively on the choices they make and their behaviour towards one another. Playground buddies help to reconcile misunderstandings between pupils. Daily opportunities to use the reflection area and sensory garden help children to be thoughtful, good listeners, considerate of other's feelings and respectful of their natural environment.

Pupils learn from the good role models of staff and other adults, who help them to develop self-confidence and independence. Behaviour is outstanding, shown by the fact that parents, staff and governors speak highly of pupils in terms of their kindness, friendliness, tolerance and respect for adults. Another example is that pupils are involved in setting the rules for their class, understand and respect them, and know the consequences if the rules are broken.

Christian displays, symbols and artefacts throughout the building reinforce class discussion, reflection, Bible stories and Christian values. For example, next to a model of a church, is the quote, 'If you want to be perfect give what you have to the poor and you will find treasure in heaven.' Next to it are two questions:- 'What do you think Jesus meant?' and 'What is more important, being right or being nice?' Children are encouraged to write their responses in a reflection book.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong and a strong awareness and concern for the needs of others at home and abroad. For example children enjoyed making prayer flags that were taken to the Himalayas and when there were floods in Australia children asked if they could write prayers for the victims and their families to be shared in collective worship.

The school has clearly focused on developing its spirituality since the last inspection and the Christian character and values have had a significant impact on the spiritual development of pupils and their ability to be well informed, reflective learners. For example, a Y5/Y6 classroom display shows eye catching artwork and speech bubbles that capture pupils' views about agape, equality and justice. A reflection area in a Y1/Y2 classroom contains the questions, 'How should we behave towards others?' and 'What is God like?' The RE Subject Leader talks with confidence and enthusiasm about the impact that Barnabas training has had on strengthening Biblical teaching across the school, how Philosophy is delivered across all age groups as a result of the Diocesan Conference and how pupils and staff engage excitedly in Art and Spirituality

lessons.

Pupils contribute enthusiastically to fundraising locally and worldwide. They are very aware of the benefits to making international links with other schools and communities. School Council gives pupils a say in running the school including opportunities to explore Christian principles. They value this responsibility. Projects have included raising money via non uniform days and cake sales and collecting donations for a local food bank.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

Collective worship is an important part of every school day for all staff and pupils, as shown by its prominence in the school prospectus, and all staff attend daily. Collective worship is securely based on the Christian gospel and always includes a welcome, opportunities for engaging with a message, singing and time for prayer and reflection. Daily acts of worship are led by staff and once a week worship is led by local clergy. Other church members lead and attend worship very regularly, in the presence of school staff.

A candle is lit during worship and music is played for prayer and reflection. One child explains this is because Jesus is the light of the world. Another child when asked was able to explain the meaning of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils enjoy worship, particularly drama and sing with great enthusiasm. On the day of the inspection, two children portrayed the roles of David and Goliath with confidence and understanding of the Christian message being delivered. Pupils are involved in planning class worship and writing prayers. Pupils enter the hall reverently and quietly and are very attentive throughout. Worship often begins with a welcome such as 'Peace be with you.....and also with you.' The Lord's prayer is used on some occasions, along with other prayers written by pupils. Pupils have a good understanding of the different purposes of prayer, for example asking to write prayers for the teenage girls on the news that had been kidnapped.

Planning of collective worship, by the headteacher, incumbent, R.E. Subject Leader and teachers is thorough and reflects the main festivals of the Church year. The church is used for the main Christian festivals. Termly school services are held at the church for each class, led by local clergy. Church services are supported by some parents and members of the church community. The school identifies this as an area to develop further.

The Christian values booklet displayed in each class worship area is a hands on document referred to by pupils. It was created by school council members, staff and governors using ideas from the Ely Diocese. Pupils visit a home for the elderly in the community, welcome visitors from different faiths into the school and talk with particular enthusiasm about being detectives at Easter time in the local church and another year their involvement in Holy Week meditation.

Governors and staff rigorously monitor and evaluate the impact of collective worship on pupils. Evidence shows that pupils talk about daily worship with knowledge and enthusiasm. Teachers observe one another delivering collective worship and give feedback which is acted upon. The RE Subject Leader ensures that curriculum planning is closely linked to collective worship by leading staff in the establishment of worship areas within the classrooms. The collective worship record sheet has helped teachers embed good practice and focus on areas for development. Governors and staff have interviewed pupils about collective worship and adapted further planning in relation to their findings.

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

The headteacher in partnership with staff and the incumbent provides excellent leadership. The leadership team has a very clear Christian vision for the school that forms a key area of the

School Improvement Plan. Governors and staff share this vision demonstrated in practical terms through their actions and comments on the day of the inspection. However, since there are currently no foundation governors, the school lacks leadership from the wider church. This has left the governing body seriously under strength and other governors have had to take on foundation governor responsibilities.

A very strong evidence base of school improvement evaluation and monitoring records with action points for further improvements show the impact of a whole school approach. This information is shared with parents and pupils via discussion, newsletters and displays. The school clearly advocates a strong Christian message through its brochure, aims, school policies and excellent displays. For example, crosses, the Lord's prayer and the school produced booklet 'Christian Values' are prominently displayed throughout the school building. The headteacher is able to clearly articulate the impact of explicit Christian values on individual learners and the life of the school. Staff and governors have used a Diocesan audit tool to look in depth at Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education from a Christian perspective. Pupils have also participated in this project. By making articulation of the Christian vision and ethos part of the School Improvement Plan, the impact for pupils has been improved. The RE Subject Leader has led significant parts of this. As a direct result, teachers are more confident and able to apply Christian values to everyday situations and have greater confidence in Biblical teaching as a result of training provided by Barnabas.

Good team work is evident. Everyone feels valued and involved in the school's development and is part of its Christian distinctiveness. This is evident through conversations with staff and action plans produced by individual staff members that are included in whole school development. Staff and governors work closely with the headteacher to further their professional development in relation to Christian distinctiveness and thus enrich the opportunities provided for pupils. Governors monitor collective worship, have observed philosophy in classrooms over a period of time and have interviewed pupils about both these topics.

RE is planned in detail throughout the school and its teaching has been enhanced by the purchase of new resources including story sacks, small world figures and models of churches for the youngest pupils. The library has a large display of books about world faiths. The impact of RE is evident throughout the school in classroom and whole school displays, records of staff training and lesson observations. The RE Subject Leader works closely with the incumbent, headteacher and governors. She has a file of evidence that supports this work and shows impact in terms of pupils' responses, examples of work and staff comments.

There is a strong partnership between the school, local churches in the benefice and the wider community. The incumbent has an effective pastoral role in the school, visiting weekly and listening to and supporting staff, pupils, governors and parents both generally and at particular times of need. Parents speak very highly of the friendly, caring atmosphere at the school and praise its strong links with the church. They verbalise how enthusiastic their children are to share Bible stories at home. One parent said, 'I chose this school for its Christian values, kindness and caring nature.'

Issues for development from the previous inspection have all been addressed. The school's self evaluation is accurate and the school shows a considerable capacity to develop further.

SIAMS report June 2014 Rackham CEVC Primary School, Main Street, Witchford, Ely, Cambridgeshire
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