



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Highfield Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Hawthorn Road
Southampton
SO17 1PX

Diocese: Winchester
Local authority: Southampton City Council
Dates of inspection: 10 June and 4 July 2013
Date of last inspection: 5, 11 and 12 October 2007
School's unique reference number: 116395
Headteacher: Mr Allan King
Inspector's name and number: Rev Neil Birkett; Number 593

School context

The Infant (Key Stage 1) and Junior (Key Stage 2) departments are divided by half a mile. The Infants' section is housed in the original Victorian building, with modern additions and is situated within the grounds of the local parish church. Of the 214 pupils on roll, approximately two fifths are from minority ethnic groups, a higher percentage than most schools. This is a school with a history of overall exceptionally high standards.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Highfield Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

Highfield Primary School is an outstanding church school. There is clear evidence of a Christian ethos throughout the school, based upon mutual trust, caring and belonging. This encourages a deep sense of support and openness. The excellent school leadership team, together with the support of the staff, parents, governing body and a very enthusiastic and supportive local church, means the school is well placed to continue to maintain its high standards in the future.

Established strengths

- The school is an excellent example of when a church school puts pupils' potential at the heart of the educational process, set within a strong Christian ethos.
- The quality of relationships and trust between everyone, who is part of the school life.
- It is a church school deeply committed to the pupils, parents and the wider community it serves.

Focus for development

- Develop spiritual leadership in children.
- Develop further the established methods of evaluation, assessment and monitoring of religious education.
- Develop further the values of the school within both religious education and collective worship.

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

There is outstanding evidence that the Christian ethos of Highfield School permeates the values and actions of all the staff and pupils within the school. The school is an excellent example of when a church school puts pupils' potential at the heart of the educational process and yet, at the same time, is able to manage the spiritual, moral, cultural and academic dimensions of the school. The school's vision is clearly carried out in all areas of

its life based upon Christian principles and excellent relationships so that both pupils and staff are motivated to attain high standards and be successful. The vast majority of the parents wholeheartedly support the Christian ethos of the school and believe that the Christian approach is not too intrusive. The parents volunteered to have a special breakfast club for every year 6 pupil, before their recent key stage 2 tests. They see that the balance between the needs of the individual and the development of the whole school community is a core element, within the excellent well being of the school. The Christian ethos is perceived as having a good influence upon the pupils' attitudes and behaviour, both within and outside the school. The pupils expressed a firm conviction that the school was a very special and happy community. They felt protected and cared for in all aspects of their school life. The tour of the separate sections of the school site (key stages 1 and 2), revealed a genuine sense of corporate identity, which is enhanced when the two stages meet for joint ventures. In an effort to create a greater bond recently, a day was set aside for year 1/2 and year 5 to carry out a shared activity linked to 'Friendship' and what it means to be a good friend. The atmosphere around the school is orderly, constructive, polite and enthusiastic, especially in the classrooms. In both the playground and the dining room, the children showed courtesy, good manners and consideration for one another. The pupils support a number of local and national charities. The evidence of the school's Christian / spiritual tradition around the school is evident, but does need to be constantly reviewed.

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

Collective worship is seen as a central and focal aspect of the school's life. The four yearly cycle scheme for collective worship is based upon close collaboration between the headteacher and the Children and Families Pastor from the local church. It reflects a comprehensive and strongly Biblical / Christian tradition. Each aspect is carefully chosen, with both care and attention, in relation to the ecclesiastical year. The scheme is cleverly based upon a series of 'Story Seeds' which are planted within the children's mind for possible future reference and 'Heroes of Faith'. The scheme is reviewed by the foundation governors committee. Each child is encouraged to develop their values through a wide variety of experiences provided by the staff, the local church and various visitors. The Collective worship observed was a whole school event held weekly in the Highfield parish church. The service was a lively and vibrant event, which included school musicians and choir. The theme developed by a guest speaker, concentrated on the life of being a Christian through the story of 'The Pilgrim's Progress'. Although the discourse did include a wide variety of creative presentation, it was noted that whilst year 6 pupils were able to articulate the main elements of the theme, some younger pupils had some difficulty with this concept. The music and prayers were well known by everyone; nevertheless the whole occasion lacked a deeper sense of collective reflection and spirituality. Recently, the school entered the 'The Rock Challenge' competition. Year 4, 5 and 6 performed a themed piece, based upon their interpretation of the Creation Story and were not only successful in numerous categories but also won the overall competition. The whole event was produced on a DVD and was an excellent joint venture between school staff, pupils and parents. The pupils were generally enthusiastic about all the different types of collective worship, especially the headteacher's. A recent comprehensive and very constructive pupil survey on collective worship reveals that the school is very responsive to future developments. Pupils did state that they would welcome more participation with the planning and execution of the collective worship sessions. The understanding and experience of prayer within the pupils' daily life is extremely strong and well embedded, with prayers at the start and the end of the school day, as well as at lunchtime.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.

The standards within religious education are outstanding. The syllabus has been influenced by the locally agreed syllabus of Hampshire County Council. There is a strong emphasis on Christianity and a blend of two world religions. There is evidence within the pupils' work of a high level of achievement and good subject knowledge. There is a system of internal staff leveller grades across the school which are allocated for progress based upon effort. Part of this assessment is based upon booklets produced by the pupils at Christmas and Easter. In both the classroom and the school council, the pupils spoke more about their understanding of Christianity, than of other world religions e.g., it was noted in a school survey, that the

pupils were less able to talk about beliefs of their non-Christian friends and be able to identify their practices. The quality of teaching of religious education observed within a year 6 class was of an outstanding level. Throughout the lesson the class were quiet, attentive and responsive. The class were introduced to the first sequence of activities based upon 'Water as a Symbol' which studies the significance of water within Hinduism and Christianity. The lesson involved a number of group activities through film and pictures, as well as including aspects of reflection based on awe and wonder. The leadership and management have been thorough and thoughtful. Foundation governors have recently reviewed and discussed religious education with the Diocesan schools' adviser.

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

The headteacher, the school staff, the Governing Body, and the local parish church work in close partnership. There was clear evidence that the vast majority support the school and its Christian ethos. They share a clear vision of what it means to be an outstanding church school, committed to the academic education of all pupils and the belief that each child should develop their full potential within a Christian environment. Both religious education and collective worship are extensively discussed within the Foundation Governors Committee. There is strong evidence of the committee giving serious thought to issues such as the school's Christian Foundation, the top 10 Bible stories and the school's values which are clearly displayed in each classroom. The inspirational headteacher has over his years of tenancy of the school, skilfully managed to steer the school in all aspects to a level of outstanding performance. It is evident that this has been based upon a combination of an inclusive vision, the development of staff expertise, nurturing delegation and the celebration of achievements, within the school, church and local community. The communication between from the headteacher, the school and the community is excellent, as is evident from the numerous informative newsletters placed upon the school's website. There is a conscious effort by the leadership to support the headteacher's quest to develop staff members in their pursuit for further professional development, especially within church schools. The partnership and bond between the school and the local parish is excellent. The church, especially the Children's Pastor, provides immense support, in the form of religious education, collective worship, Christian festivals / rites of passage, pastoral care, moral encouragement, prayers and facilities for the many school extra-curricular activities e.g. the use of the parish church every Thursday for a whole school collective worship and 'Bible Club'. An annual school report is presented to the Parochial Church Council.

SIAMS report June 2013, Highfield CE(A) Primary School, Southampton SO17 1PX