



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### **St Matthew's High Brooms Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Powdermill Lane, Tunbridge Wells TN4 9DY

**Previous SIAS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Rochester**

Local authority: Kent

Dates of inspection: 28 January 2016

Date of last inspection: 8 December 2010

School's unique reference number: 118709

Headteacher: Judith Holt

Inspector's name and number: Anne Southgate 820

#### **School context**

St Matthew's is a larger than average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium is above the national average. The majority of pupils are from white British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from worshipping Christian families is low. There is a small, but growing number of pupils from other faiths. Since the last SIAS inspection, Ofsted placed the school into Special Measures and there has since been a change of headteacher. Extremely rapid improvement led to the school being judged good in 2014.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Matthew's as a Church of England school are outstanding**

- This is a genuine Christian community, rooted in shared Christian values.
- The care for the wellbeing of each individual is exceptional.
- The desire to develop God-given talents has resulted in achievement improving rapidly.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong.
- The school prepares future leaders of church schools very well.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Develop pupil leadership of worship so that pupils take ownership of and responsibility for this aspect of the life of the school
- Develop effective and consistent assessment in Religious Education (RE), so that progress in RE is increased for all pupils.
- Broaden collective worship to include the use of colours to celebrate the different times of the church's year in ways which enhance the school's Anglican identity

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

Staff at St Matthew's are concerned for the well-being of every pupil. Considerable resources have been invested into supporting pupils socially and emotionally. This investment is grounded in Christian compassion, love and service. As a result, pupils make excellent progress. The school's core Christian values of respect, responsibility, honesty and kindness, are known and used by all stakeholders. These values are securely rooted in biblical teaching and they are driving the continuing, rapid improvement in achievement and behaviour. All pupils experience high quality art, music and sport, and these are frequently used to express the school's Christian character. For example, the art club has made values trees, which are displayed permanently in the school hall. These trees are painted with their roots in a Bible. Pupils can explain clearly how their learning and behaviour is rooted in biblical teaching, and in Christian belief. Pupils appreciate and use the very wide range of opportunities to reflect, to ask big questions and to pray. Pupils from other faiths, and with no faith, also value quiet times. These pupils feel confident to express their views in this extremely supportive school community. As a result, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils is very strong. Pupils remember the Bible stories that they learn in RE, and they enjoy a range of active learning experiences. Skilful questioning helps pupils to think deeply. Assessment in RE, however, is not consistent across the school. Adults and pupils use the Christian values to reflect on and to discuss behaviour issues. For example, a Year 3 pupil said, "Jesus was kind to everyone, like in the Good Samaritan, so I should be like him." The issue from the last inspection to incorporate explicit Christian values into key documentation, has been fully addressed. The school's website and documents clearly proclaim the Christian character of the school. This is a school where all pupils achieve their best, and where achievement gaps have closed. This success is driven by the school's Christian character, which has improved behaviour, and raised pupils' self-esteem, enabling them all to learn effectively.

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

Pupils participate enthusiastically in collective worship, and they recognise that it is an important part of the school day. Pupils very much enjoy singing and taking part in drama during worship. They sometimes read prayers. Worship centres on the school's Christian values and on Bible stories. It helps pupils to reflect on the meaning and significance of these for their own lives. Adults in the school engage fully with collective worship, and leadership of worship is shared widely amongst teachers. Pupils particularly enjoy the weekly acts of worship, which are led by the church youth worker. However, pupils do not lead worship and this is something that they would like to do, particularly older pupils. Worship themes are followed up during the school day in, for example, circle time. Pupils are able to reflect on the worship themes and often discuss these at home. The interactive prayer corners in every classroom are used often, and pupils find these very helpful. The school enables pupils to reflect and to pray throughout the school day. Thought-provoking big questions are displayed around the school, as well as boxes for worries, and for both private and shared prayers. Pupils use these opportunities well, which provides support for them particularly in difficult times. Pupils' prayers are often read during worship, so that they understand the relevance of prayer in their Christian community. The development point from the last inspection to formalise the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship has been addressed. All stakeholders, including pupils, governors and parents, feed back their responses to collective worship. This has led to improvements, an example being that pupils now enter worship whilst singing, rather than in silence. Older pupils have a good understanding of Christian beliefs, such as that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Younger pupils, who experience 'Godly play', are introduced to Christian traditions and to Bible stories. However, many pupils have little understanding of the church's year and the colours that are used in different church seasons. Whilst this reflects the tradition of the local church, it does not allow them to

experience the diversity within Anglicanism.

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

The headteacher is highly effective in building a cohesive, Christian community in which everyone strives to be the best that they can be. This is driven by the belief that everyone should be the person that God has created them to be, and by a commitment to raising the self-esteem of the whole community. As a result, the school has improved exceedingly quickly and pupils now make higher than average progress. The headteacher's Christian vision is shared effectively with all stakeholders, so that everyone works together to achieve the best for each pupil. This culture of everyone working to achieve their God-given potential applies equally to adults. Teachers are helped to develop as future leaders of church schools extremely well. Several have been promoted to become middle leaders, and are enthusiastic about developing further to become headteachers of church schools. The continuing professional development of all staff is taken seriously. This includes training in RE and in understanding what it means to be a church school. As a result, preparing future leaders of church schools is a strength of the school. RE is led well and is giving a high priority for development. Partnerships are highly effective. The school benefits from working with other local church schools by sharing good practice, an example being the introduction of 'leading lights' (pupils who lead worship). The partnership with the local church has strengthened. The church youth worker works together with staff at the school to support vulnerable pupils and their families. This enables pupils to have a sense of belonging to a Christian community, and to be ready to learn. The incumbent is active as a school governor. With other foundation governors, he monitors church school issues, and ensures that these are included in the school improvement plan. The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship and RE. The headteacher is committed to serving the diverse local community. She has created a very happy, supportive and aspirational church school community, where everyone is enabled to fulfil God's purpose for them.

SIAMS report January 2016 St Matthew's High Brooms, Tunbridge Wells TN4 9DY