



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### Sutton-at-Hone Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School

Church Road, Sutton-at-Hone,  
Dartford, Kent,  
DA4 9EX.

**Previous SIAS grade:** Good

**Current SIAMS grade:** Good

**Diocese:** Rochester

Local authority: Kent

Date of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> January 2016

Date of last inspection: November 2010

School's unique reference number: 118855

Headteacher: L Goulding

Inspector's name and number: Pamela Draycott 161

#### School context

Sutton-at-Hone is a larger than average Church of England voluntary aided primary school on the outskirts of Dartford. It is proud of its history of Christian service to its pupils and their families. Since the previous inspection the number on roll has risen by almost one third. The percentage of pupils with any sort of special educational need is below the national average. The percentage for whom pupil premium funding is received due to social disadvantage is around the national average. Almost all pupils are from white British backgrounds. A small proportion come from families who regularly attend church outside of involvement with school.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sutton-at-Hone as a Church of England school are good

- The effective leadership provided by the headteacher, senior leaders and governors in promoting and developing the school's Christian ethos of 'ASPIRE'. This supports school development well and is well linked to the good progress made by the majority of pupils.
- Pupil behaviour is of a very high standard and reflects the strong, positive and caring relationships across the school. These are based on the school's inclusive Christian values.
- Pupils are treated consistently and yet as individuals, precious to God. As such they develop self-confidence and respectful attitudes towards others.

#### Areas to improve

- Refocus the school's Christian values so that they are clearly known by all members of the school community and so that they are sharply focused on supporting future developments.
- In religious education (RE) ensure that all teaching emphasises developing knowledge and understanding of religious belief and practice, what it means for adherents to that religion and its significance for the pupils as individuals whatever their faith position.

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

Sutton-at-Hone is a welcoming and happy school community with a strong sense of caring and belonging. It effectively strives to ensure that pupils develop well academically and personally. This means that overall standards are improving and pupils make good academic progress from their various starting points. It also means that behaviour is of an extremely high quality. Pupils are encouraged to be self-confident, polite and respectful. The school's mission statement has an explicit Christian underpinning which is well summarised in its motto, 'Believe and Achieve'. The school's Christian ethos of 'ASPIRE' is clearly expressed. The 'S' in 'ASPIRE' standing for 'Strong Christian Values'. The school identified these 12 values some years ago. They are clearly linked to biblical teaching. Pupils, parents and staff know that Christian values underpin the school's life and work but cannot always identify or articulate the significance of all 12 values. This lessens their impact. However, there is a shared commitment to further development and improvement based on wanting all pupils to flourish within a strong Christian and inclusive learning environment. Pupils are however able to express why the school values are Christian, because, 'they are based on what Jesus did and how he behaved'. The school treats pupils as individuals whilst maintaining a consistency of approach. In keeping with the school's Christian ethos, the work of the 'Family Support Adviser' is an example of how support is provided to help pupils and their families through longer or shorter term difficult times. The school celebrates a wide range of achievement, including recognising those who display Christian values through their actions or relationships. Pupils feel safe and cared for in school. However, attendance, has been below the national average but is slowly improving through a consistent policy and rewards programme. There is a broad curriculum in place which is extended through school visits, charitable fund raising, extra-curricular provision and an annual RE enrichment day. RE focused visits to the parish church enhances the school's Christian ethos. These contribute well to the range of opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils recognise the importance of learning about faiths other than Christianity in helping them develop a wider knowledge and understanding of God's world. Pupils recognise that RE makes a contribution to their own lives through helping them consider what they think and believe. Consequently, RE makes a good contribution to the school's open and inclusive Christian ethos.

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

Daily worship is well planned and is central to school life. Worship content explores, for example, biblical stories and teachings, the example of Jesus, Christian belief about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the school's values. Consequently, the worship programme contributes well to pupils developing knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith, irrespective of their own, or their families' faith position. A clear structure for delivering worship is in place which happens in different groupings across the school week. This is extended by termly Eucharist services. Pupils and staff have positive attitudes towards worship which is valued and enjoyed. Pupils participate well enjoying singing, listening, discussing, and offering ideas and responses as well as through prayer and reflection. 'Leading Lights', a group of Year 5 pupils, have a pivotal role in planning, leading and evaluating worship. Others have opportunity to evaluate the worship programme through 'pupil voice' surveys. Ideas are carefully considered and changes have been made as a result of this. Parents report that their children talk about what has happened in worship and often sing or say prayers they have learned in school. Prayer and reflection is increasingly important and a usual part of school life. Pupils know the Lord's Prayer and find it natural to write their own prayers in class and place it in their classroom reflection area. They know that prayer is important, for example, 'when you feel sad about something or when you want God to help someone or when you want to thank God for something.' Elements of Anglican worship such as lighting candles, using different colours for different times of the Church's year, opening and closing sentences with responses are all well embedded in school practice.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

RE now has a high profile as a 'core subject' within the school, a significant improvement since the

previous denominational inspection. The curriculum time allocation is in line with requirements for a church school. This is complemented by an annual RE day, the most recent one being focused on 'prayer'. The content of the RE curriculum follows the Rochester diocesan scheme of work and as such there is an appropriate balance between focusing on Christianity and on other world faiths. Teachers are confident in teaching RE, having received training and being supported by the effective subject leader. Teaching is generally good with some outstanding. When it is outstanding strong links are made between developing knowledge and understanding of a particular faith, its significance for members of that faith and its relevance for the pupils themselves. Pupils' attainment is in line with other core subjects. Consequently, pupils make good progress in RE in all year groups. RE is very well led by a committed subject leader. She supports teachers effectively in monitoring pupil progress which leads to appropriate interventions to improve learning further. Pupils engage very well with and enjoy RE which they see as an important area of study in a church school. The level of discussion is at least at age-related expectations. They have opportunities to compare and contrast beliefs and ideas as well as link them to their own lives. Their written work in RE is overall detailed and there is little evidence of unfinished work which indicates their engagement and involvement in the subject. Pupils follow instructions carefully and very well. Learning is teacher led. Pupils are rarely given choice of activities so that they can take more responsibility for their own learning.

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

The headteacher, ably supported by her senior leadership team and governors, has developed the school as a church school well since the previous inspection. The key issues identified then have been addressed well. Leaders have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. This is demonstrated in its accurate self-evaluation and strategic improvement planning. This leads effectively to good school improvement planning with clear priorities and timescales for development. Governors are supportive of the school as a church school and are appropriately involved in school life. Lower than average attendance has been an issue. Aware of this, and in support of the school, a governor has been linked specifically to provide oversight of policy and practice in this area. The RE link governor is proactive in his support for the subject area as is the Vicar in his support of the worship programme. Both areas meet statutory requirements. There is much improved practice in each area since the previous denominational inspection. Parents are overall supportive of the school and think that their children are well-served by it. They are supportive of its Christian ethos whether or not they as a family are practicing Christians. The school has good links with the parish church principally through the vicar and parochial church council governors. Other church members are also involved periodically, as in the 'prayer day' in the previous academic year. The school is committed to the professional development of staff. It provides a range of opportunities for them to develop their understanding of working in the church school sector, most notably through training by a diocesan staff member. The subject leader and link governor for RE regularly attend diocesan support and moderation meetings. The school is outward looking and has supportive links with the Diocese of Rochester. In addition it works in partnership with the Gravesham Anglican Schools Partnership with Dartford and the Dartford School's consortium.

Sutton-at-Hone C of E (VA) Primary School, Church Road, Sutton-at-Hone, Dartford, Kent, DA4 9EX