



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Great Horwood Church of England Voluntary Controlled Combined School

School End
Great Horwood
Milton Keynes
MK 17 0RG

Previous SIAMS grade: Satisfactory

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Buckinghamshire

Date of inspection: 26 May 2016

Date of last inspection: May 2011

School's unique reference number: 110441

Headteacher: Paula Shaw

Inspector's name and number: Lizzie McWhirter 244

School context

Great Horwood Combined School serves the local village and surrounding communities. The majority of its growing numbers of pupils are white British. The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding or for whom English is not their first language is below average. The school also serves a local Gypsy Roma Traveller community. The headteacher and deputy headteacher both took up their posts since the last inspection after significant changes in the senior leadership of the school. In addition, there was an interregnum at St James's Church for two years.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Great Horwood as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The nurturing and inclusive Christian environment in this welcoming and worshipping community is supportive of all the children and families it serves.
- Strong leadership and good governance is strengthened by the mutual and substantial partnership between church and school.
- The Christian vision and dedication of the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, embraced by all, ensures that Christian values are embedded in the life of this church school.
- Prayer and reflection strongly features in the life of this school, making a significant contribution to the spiritual journeys of the whole community.

Areas to improve

- Extend pupils' experiences to meet people of faith more frequently in school and in their own places of worship, thus supporting their spiritual and cultural development.

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

Great Horwood School [GHS] provides a very exciting and inspirational environment. It successfully embodies its mission to teach, model and live by their core Christian values of love, respect and perseverance. These make a positive difference to the lives of children because they stem directly from biblical teaching. Relationships are excellent because all members of this inclusive community know they are accepted and loved as individuals as part of God's family. All pupils thrive in this Christian culture which the school creates. This includes pupils who have more recently moved into the area. Consequently, they are proud to belong, feel valued and achieve highly. In addition, progress is excellent and well above the national average for all groups of pupils. This is because GHS' strong Christian character positively encourages Christian values, such as perseverance, so pupils constantly achieve the best they possibly can. Staff are tireless in their support for different groups of pupils, including vulnerable pupils. Pupils show great respect for different cultures and communities through religious education [RE] and worship. These make a very good contribution to the Christian character of the school and to pupils' personal development. Pupils show very good knowledge of Christianity, as one would expect in a church school. They are also very well informed about Sikhism and Judaism. They ask important questions, such as, 'If God believes in forgiveness, why did he send the Apocalypse?' Their vicar helps them to answer such questions. However, pupils say they would still welcome more visitors from different faiths coming into school as well as meeting people of faith in their places of worship. Pupils can relate the Christian narrative well and can explain incarnation, salvation, Pentecost and Trinity in their own words. Their sense of global awareness and diverse communities and cultures is well supported through fundraising activities which includes supporting children in India and Cambodia through World Vision. Such activities greatly support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Engaging and inspiring worship at GHS is integral to daily life. This is because acts of worship involve and engage everyone and are linked to Bible stories, including stories about people of faith and the school's values. Themes celebrate the church year and nurture pupils' spiritual development. A very good example includes pupils' knowledge of the significance of Ascension-tide and Pentecost. They explain, 'After he had gone back up into heaven, the Holy Spirit was around him. The Holy Spirit washes away all sins as God and Jesus forgive those who have done bad in their lives'. The relationship between the vicar and the school is strong because of his regular commitment to leading pupils' worship in school and at St James' Church. Children too, help to lead worship. Parents also comment on the child-friendly approaches used in worship by the vicar. They say they enjoy school worship, which they are invited to, in both church and school. Next steps, already identified, include the children leading and evaluating worship more frequently as they develop as independent worshippers. For GHS pupils, prayer and reflection is very important. This includes weekly meditations in school and in the school grounds as well as on residential visits. Prayer features strongly in the life of this school, which pupils willingly contribute to. Pupils are growing in their understanding of the Trinitarian nature of God. The recent visit of the Bishop of Buckingham enabled pupils to celebrate their Christian distinctiveness when the Bishop blessed the banner the pupils had made to celebrate their school and remind them of their Anglican heritage in daily worship. Furthermore, they reflect on their uniqueness, through the message the Bishop brought 'as we look at our fingertips, none are the same, we're all unique but equal'.

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

Leadership at GHS is very strong with shared, collaborative and yet clearly defined roles and responsibilities. This is because the headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors all have a strong vision and dedication to GHS's ethos and culture. This is embraced by the whole community, with collaboration and commitment from all staff. Parents, pupils and staff value the supportive partnership between church and school. Very good community links extend beyond the parish church and includes the school valuing being part of the diocesan family. RE and worship more than meet statutory requirements and are well led, managed and resourced. Worship reflects values which humans should show in everyday life. New RE books are green in colour to symbolise the liturgical colour for the majority of the church year. As such, both these key areas of school life enjoy a high profile. All areas

from the previous inspection have been addressed, with the school identifying clear priorities for future action. Governors look closely at data on standards and progress in pupil learning, reflecting on the ethos of this school and its Anglican heritage. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked hard in a relatively short period of time to ensure standards have risen and they and the governors are committed to the wellbeing of pupils and staff. The school is very much on a journey, but good progress has been made in the last few years. Governors plan for, and monitor the development of the school's Christian ethos, ensuring that Christian principles and practice underpin everything. Their robust, regular and rigorous self-evaluation continually and consistently informs the school's academic performance and the excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. A very good example includes the commitment from the Parochial Church Council [PCC] to ensure the centrality of the Christian faith to the life of the school. This is extended to the purchase of Bibles for the pupils to use in school and when they leave at the end of their primary schooling. They wrote thank you letters to the PCC, saying, 'I will try to read my Bible at home and at school. I love my Bible. Thank you'. As a result, GHS's pupils experience real love in a context where Christian values are taught. Governors support staff professional development and training, taking this very seriously in preparation for future leadership of church schools. The school values support from the diocese and staff and governors have benefitted from diocesan training. There is a real sense of belonging, identity and involvement with church, school and community working closely together. A very good example includes staff who say, 'the most important thing to me is the strong feeling of belonging that I have here. This comes from both the children and adults at the school and the support that we give each other, promoting the value of love'. Community links are strong, such as the annual Remembrance-tide commemorations. Links are also growing with Sir Thomas Hickman School, enabling wider links with a contrasting diverse community. Parents testify to the fact that GHS' pupils benefit greatly from the family community and pastoral care here. Thus, GHS is a beacon in providing a Christian community.

SIAMS report May 2016 Great Horwood CE VC Primary School, Milton Keynes MK 17 0RG