



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



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

### **Mears Ashby Church of England (Endowed) Voluntary Aided Primary School**

North Street  
Mears Ashby, Northampton  
NN6 0DW

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Satisfactory**

**Diocese: Peterborough**

Local authority: Northamptonshire

Date of inspection: 21 June 2016

Date of last inspection: October 2010

School's unique reference number: 122026

Executive Headteacher: Julie Grey

Inspector's name and number: The Revd Dr Jason Phillips 598

#### **School context**

The school is smaller than average with 82 pupils who are predominantly White British. The percentage of pupils attracting government funding for disadvantaged pupils is well below the national average. The number of pupils with a special educational need is above the national average. The school has benefitted from the leadership of an executive headteacher since September 2015.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Mears Ashby as a Church of England school are satisfactory**

- The recent impact of the governing body and senior leaders is bringing about improving outcomes for pupils and is developing the church school ethos.
- The impact of the new creative curriculum is developing the school's Christian values and pupils' spirituality.
- The school's effective links with a diversity of organisations is promoting improved pupil outcomes and helping pupils to see their school as part of a wider Christian community.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Demonstrate the positive impact of the school's Christian character on pupil progress in English, mathematics and Religious Education (RE) by ensuring it is consistently good or better.
- Ensure that early in the new academic year all governors and all staff access training by the diocese to equip them to use the school improvement framework (SIAMS) strategically.
- Make sure that the church school dimension is evaluated and reported upon regularly to governors as a priority, including evaluations by children.
- Revise collective worship planning and delivery so that Christian themes and values are developed.

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

This is an improving church school. This academic year there has been a focus on driving up standards of attainment and progress as well as developing the church school aspect. This is resulting in most pupils now making better progress. However, this is not yet a good church school because past underachievement in English, mathematics and RE has not been fully eradicated. The revised creative curriculum is a positive development which is strengthening pupil engagement and improving learning outcomes. It is helping pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. This is because the curriculum has a spiritual underpinning and is informed by the school's Christian values such as kindness and respect. These Christian values have a growing profile within the school. While pupils show some awareness of them they are not yet making strong links between the school's Christian values and their behaviour and attitudes. This is because the increased emphasis on Christian values is still relatively new. The relationships at the school are positive, especially between adults and children. This prospers a secure and happy sense of community where pupils feel able to express themselves. It also results in pupils enjoying coming to school so that attendance is generally above the national average. Parents readily talk of the 'warm welcome' that the school offers. As a consequence, parents are committed to the church school community because of its inclusive ethos. The school makes a positive contribution to pupils' understanding and respect of diverse communities, for example through the link with the Khotokrom Christian School in Ghana. This is extended further by effective links with a range of organisations such as the Wellingborough Multi-faith Team. Pupils also develop a sense of empathy through supporting charities such as Christian Aid and Children of Orissa. RE makes a satisfactory contribution to the school's Christian character and further extends pupils' multicultural awareness. An example of this is the Year 1/2 study of the Hindu festivals of Divali and Raksha Bandhan.

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

Collective worship is recognised as having an integral significance to the character of this church school. The school aims to make its collective worship interesting and varied. An example of this is the inclusion of visitors such as the Christian SALT Team and the parish priest. However, collective worship is not yet good because the themes and forms are not sufficiently coherent to deepen pupils' wider biblical knowledge and awareness of the Trinity. Planning for collective worship includes the main Christian festivals. This helps pupils appreciate the Christian rhythm of the year and the importance of celebration in faith. Whilst most pupils appreciate collective worship, their engagement is not as extensive as it could be. This is because there are insufficient opportunities for children to plan and lead collective worship for themselves. Pupils are respectful and behave appropriately in collective worship. They demonstrate a growing appreciation of the significance of faith for believers, enhanced by visits to worship at All Saints Church. The school's Christian values are beginning to influence collective worship. An example of this is the lighting of the candle to welcome Christ into the community of the school, in a month where community is the focus Christian value. Prayer is appropriately developed and children and adults appreciate the prayer times to reflect and be still, supporting spiritual development. Feedback is gained from stakeholders including through monitoring by governors. The limited awareness of the SIAMS evaluation framework by school leaders restricts the impact of evaluations to bring about improvement. Further, children have insufficient opportunities to evaluate provision and outcomes, which means developments are not always considerate of pupil needs. Statutory requirements for collective worship are met.

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

The school has a long tradition of valuing RE. It is seen as important to the life of the school by leaders, ensuring it affirms the Christian character of the school and the spiritual development of the children. With recent curriculum improvements in teaching and learning, RE is improving. This is developing better pupil attitudes to RE which are now generally positive. However, the effectiveness of RE is not yet good because teaching and the resulting standards of pupil attainment and progress are not consistently good. The school effectively utilises the Northamptonshire RE syllabus to promote Christian and multicultural understanding, and to develop skills such as evaluation, comparison and investigation. An example of this is Year 5/6 exploring the symbolism

of Mandirs around the world and pupils' thoughtful comparison of Hindu and Christian concepts of God. As with the wider curriculum, the school's Christian values are increasingly influencing RE resulting in pupils beginning to see their application to everyday life. RE is often interesting, an example of which is a recent discussion on the relative importance of a range of Christian values to community. However, as the assessment system is still emerging, lessons are often not structured to challenge higher attaining pupils sufficiently because tasks are not always built upon pupils' prior attainment. This limits the enjoyment of RE by some pupils. The subject leader is knowledgeable and leads with devotion raising the profile of RE in school. The school is ensuring careful transition to the new subject lead, showing its commitment to RE. Governors monitor provision ensuring statutory requirements are met.

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

Governance of this church school has improved considerably enabling governors to lead this school effectively through a period of instability. Despite rapid transition, governors ensure the wellbeing of the whole school community. Due to the re-articulation of the school's Christian values by school leaders and as recent changes take effect, most pupils are now making better progress. However, this is not yet a good church school because standards in English, mathematics and RE, though improving, are not consistently good. Governors are focussed on developing church school leaders as central to school improvement. They link effectively with a range of organisations to do this, for example with an outstanding church school and the Peterborough Diocese. Governors are now more strategic in ensuring succession planning and in securing the long-term viability of the school. An example of this is the appointment of the executive headteacher, which is leading to positive change and rising standards. The school has positive links with All Saints Church and the local community which are mutually supportive. This creates much goodwill towards the school and helps the pupils see their school as part of a wider Christian community. Governors ensure RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements and that they have a place of value in the life of the school. This is shown, for example, by the underpinning of the new creative curriculum with Christian values to develop pupils' spirituality. Governors monitor RE, collective worship and the church school dimension but have only an emerging understanding of the SIAMS framework as an evaluation tool. This means that the impact of these evaluation strategies is not as great as it might be and the application of the school's Christian vision lacks rigour. However, improving governance means that the results of monitoring and evaluation are now starting to improve this church school and develop its Christian character.

SIAMS report June 2016 Mears Ashby CE VA (Endowed) Northampton NN6 0DW