



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Hickling Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School

The Street
Hickling
Norwich
Norfolk
NR12 0XX

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Norwich

Local authority: Norfolk

Dates of inspection: 26 February 2015

Date of last inspection: 1 April 2010

School's unique reference number: 121043

Headteacher: Jo Nutbeam

Inspector's name and number: Stephen Green 809

School context

This very small rural school has 22 pupils on the roll. They are generally taught in one class, although there is provision to split into two teaching groups when this is more appropriate. The school has been in a federation with two other small church schools since 2013. The other schools are 2 miles away and were categorised as requiring improvement in their last OFSTED inspections. (Hickling was graded as good). The headteacher works across all three schools and has been in post since September 2014. The federation spans two benefices, and the local church is within walking distance.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hickling Infants School as a Church of England school are good

- The school's values are having a strong impact upon pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, and upon the relationships between members of the school community.
- Membership of the Swallowtail Federation of Schools is starting to generate additional resources, expertise and opportunities for staff and pupils. These enhance the curriculum as well as the wellbeing and professional development of the teaching staff.
- The close relationship with the village church and the commitment and support of local clergy, are having a very positive impact upon the development of the school's Christian ethos.

Areas to improve

- To ensure the school's Christian distinctiveness is more evident in its website and communications with parents. This will ensure that those who do not regularly visit the school are aware of the school's commitment and Christian vision.
- To increase the level of pupils' spirituality by helping them to appreciate the value of personal prayer.

- To ensure parents and pupils are regularly provided with opportunities to contribute their views, so that these can contribute to further school improvement.

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

This is a truly inclusive school where all pupils feel valued. The school's monitoring data shows that pupils are almost all making good progress despite frequently being below age-related expectations on entry to the school. This is particularly true with Year 1 which shows value added scores substantially exceeding the national norm in all subject areas. All groups of vulnerable pupils are making good progress. The attendance rate is good and improving, and there have been no recent exclusions. The school's Christian values, although not yet obvious in its website and newsletters, are very obvious when visiting the school. These are built upon the Values for Life scheme, and are common to all schools in the federation. These Christian values clearly shape the school's thinking and are a major reason for the improvements in attendance, the way staff relate to pupils, and the lack of exclusions. A recent review of the mission statement and school values involved staff and governors, and has ensured that the school's Christian foundation is strongly prominent. Parents and governors all spoke of the positive impact that these values are having upon pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, and the children could speak confidently about them. The school has a strong commitment to charity work, and has recently financed a bicycle ambulance in Africa. Hickling pupils work through the Malawi Education Link to support children in Africa who are less fortunate than they are. Pupils behave very well and parents were keen to attribute this to the school's Christian character and values. One parent described the school as being 'a very nurturing environment.' Another (who also works at a school Hickling pupils transfer to) said that 'the children who come from Hickling are different. Their values are noticeable.' Another described it as 'a loving environment. They (the staff) show that they care.' Pupils have a good understanding of the diversity of faiths in the world, with a focus upon Christianity and Judaism. The school recognises the desirability of making more contacts with representatives of other faiths to supplement the frequent visits to the school by leaders of the local Anglican church, the Methodists and the Baptists. Pupils find Religious Education (RE) to be exciting and challenging, and it has an obvious impact upon both the character of the school and the pupils' spiritual development. Although resources for RE and Collective Worship (CW) are few, they are generally of a good quality and are prominently displayed. The school recognises the need to prioritise their improvement and by sharing resources throughout the federation the federation schools are able to make the most effective use of the resources that they do have.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

CW usually takes place in the school hall, which has been made into a very suitable venue with high-quality and thought-provoking displays and murals. These displays make the school's commitment to its Christian foundation obvious, and reflect both Biblical stories and work and worship the children have recently been focussing upon. Parents who were spoken to agreed that the school uses CW effectively as a tool for developing the Christian values that it focuses upon. They commented upon the positive impact that worship has upon their children, and made a link between worship, values and pupils' very positive attitudes. Governors have noticed that parents are responding enthusiastically to the opportunities they have been given to have a greater role in school since the last inspection. They have been given more opportunities to join in worship, usually being invited to join in two formal acts of worship each week as well as termly services in the local church and chapel to mark significant events in the church year. They appreciate the recent opportunity they have been given to express their views on RE and worship. Pupils enjoy CW, especially when they are able to play an active part through role play or reading the school prayer. There is an appropriate basis upon Biblical teaching and the life of Jesus Christ. The federation spans two benefices, which has enabled the school to benefit from having two sets of clergy to help lead and support worship. Since the last inspection foundation governors have become more involved in monitoring and

evaluating worship. In addition, several other members of the local church and chapel take part (by leading worship themselves or accompanying the children singing), and the children celebrate major festivals in the church and chapel. School leaders recognise the value of greater communication with those leading worship, so that themes and values currently being targeted by the school are also used as a focus for visitors. Pupils have a school prayer which they wrote themselves, but although their spirituality is developing, they appear to have little understanding of the value that personal prayer can have in everyday life and there are few other prayers written by children which are visible in the school. Pupils understand God as Father and Son, but have as yet no understanding of the Holy Trinity.

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

The headteacher, who is also the CW co-ordinator, and the RE co-ordinator consistently and confidently articulate and promote the new school vision and values. These are distinctively Christian and made very explicit around the school. All school leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development based upon accurate self-evaluation which feeds into their strategic planning. Governors and parents believe there is a strong link between the school's Christian values and both pupil behaviour and the positive relationships that exist within the school. Strong and consistent leadership by senior staff and governors sets a consistent example for all staff, and the enthusiasm of foundation governors and the headteacher is having an obvious impact upon the development of the school. When making the recent headship appointment, governors were keen to involve the diocese fully and to appoint someone who had a strong Christian vision for the school. Since taking up appointment the headteacher has worked hard to make the best use of the available resources within all three of her schools, and to drive their spiritual development forward. A good example of this is the way she has rolled out the Values for Life scheme into all three schools and the way she is supporting the RE co-ordinator (who does not have a teaching role at Hickling) to work across all three schools. The federation allows the expertise of staff to be shared, and provides them with opportunities to develop professionally which they would find difficult to obtain otherwise in a very small school like this. Hickling School is benefitting from access to additional clergy through the federation, additional staff expertise (e.g the very enthusiastic and committed RE co-ordinator), and additional resources which can be shared between the schools. Parents have appreciated becoming more involved in the everyday life of the school since the last inspection and there is currently a survey being carried out across all three schools to seek their views about RE and worship. In order to ensure that their views contribute to future school self-evaluation and improvement, the school recognises a need to seek their views more frequently and keep a record of the responses. The school does not regularly seek pupils' views on lessons and worship and therefore there is no mechanism to remind school leaders of the types of lessons and worship that the pupils find to be most effective. The school communicates regularly with parents and has a weekly newsletter which is much appreciated. It recognises the need to develop its website. Although the school's commitment to its Christian foundation is obvious to all visitors through its displays and policies and its list of aims, it is seldom mentioned on either the school website or in newsletters for parents. The diocese has provided valuable and much appreciated support for the school in developing its RE and is continuing to offer a lead on assessment. The RE co-ordinator has co-ordinated a review of teaching skills, and contributes effectively to the process of school self-evaluation and improvement. Opportunities to work across all the schools in the federation are appreciated by her and provide good professional development opportunities. Foundation governors and clergy visit the school regularly and contribute to the process of monitoring and review very effectively. They organised a service to celebrate the school's federation which had the support of the bishops of Norwich and Thetford and was well supported by parents from all three schools.