



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Alphege Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School and Nursery

New Road
Solihull
B91 3DW

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Birmingham

Local authority: Solihull

Date of inspection: 20 November 2014

Date of last inspection: 2009

School's unique reference number: 104090

Headteacher: Jo Slough

Inspector's name and number: Lizzie McWhirter 244 Incumbent: Revd Helen Greenham

School context

St Alphege Infant School is an integral part of the St Alphege federation. This school in the centre of Solihull is adjacent to its parish church. Whilst the majority of its young pupils are from a White British background, the school is growing in the number of families it welcomes from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Those children receiving pupil premium funding as well as those with special educational needs achieve well.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Alphege Infants as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The focus on each child as an individual in this welcoming and worshipping Christian community which develops positive attitudes amongst its pupils, who become confident, independent learners and achieve highly.
- The strong sense of an inclusive community, enhanced by mutual and substantial partnerships with the church. This is created by the school's focus on the Christian value of love, ensuring all know they are accepted.
- The Christian vision of the headteacher which is embraced by everyone, ensuring the Christian character of the school permeates all school life.
- The importance of prayer in the life of this church school which nurtures pupils' spiritual development.

Areas to improve

- Enhance pupil evaluation and opportunities for pupils to plan and lead collective worship in order to increase pupil engagement with worship and ensure best quality worship in this church school at all times.

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

St Alphege Infants sustains an excellent learning environment for its pupils, who are proud to belong, feel valued and achieve highly. This is because the school strives to be an inclusive, happy and family community, rooted in the Christian faith. More importantly, there is a strong desire to live out the school's chosen Christian values. Pupils place great importance on their church/school links, saying, 'whenever we're in the playground and look across and see the church it reminds us of Jesus'. They articulate valuing difference as seeing love transcend all faiths. Attendance is exemplary as children understand that good attendance and good attainment go hand in hand. They are happy to be in school and 'skip down the corridor' in this school where their parents too feel welcomed. This is because the school works hard with individual pupils and their families, with the support of staff committed to ensuring that pupils' needs are met with tailored and personalised learning. Achievement is well above national average as children are supported in every lesson and because they are involved and encouraged in their own learning and assessment. The school's values are built into every lesson and children thrive on the culture and ethos which St Alphege creates. Christian values make them secure in their learning in an environment where the staff are exemplary role models. All achievement is celebrated and linked to the school's values. Pupils feel able to make a positive contribution to school life and experience the Christian values of service and generosity through their fundraising. Such values enhance their understanding of their place in the world and their responsibility to others. Pupils show respect for the diverse community they belong to, enriched by visits to other places of worship. Displays throughout school focus on the school's core Christian values and nurture pupils spiritual development with challenging questions. Learning is aspirational, not just academic, with a wide range of achievement valued, including music which is strength of the school and fosters creativity.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The attitude of pupils to collective worship is excellent because the quality of worship offered to them is making a real difference in their lives, contributing greatly to their spiritual development. All staff attend worship, which is recognised as an important part of the day as it helps to build community. Consequently, pupils and parents speak highly of worship, and are able to make links between Jesus' teaching in the Bible and everyday situations. Pupils cite The Good Samaritan as an example to help others. Harvest, Christmas and Easter are celebrated in church, with a strong emphasis on the Christian Journey to the Stable as well as the Journey to the Cross. Consequently, pupils develop a good sense of the symbolism and cycle of the Christian church year. Parents value the half termly Eucharist which involves pupils and parents together and is an important feature of the regular worshipping life of St Alphege. Church worship every Wednesday helps to instil 'a very reverent atmosphere'. The team vicar is also chaplain to the school and is a welcome and regular visitor, demonstrating the close links between church and school. Pupils find singing, praying and hearing Bible stories in worship helps them live their lives. They say they 'love to follow in Jesus' footsteps and say good words to him. Collective worship varies in its approach, enabling pupils to become independent worshippers and 'pray on their own'. Through Godly Play and worship led by the local 'Open the Book' team, worship is relevant to the children and captures the essence of the school's values. Consequently, pupils say they 'feel closer to God and understand more what Jesus does'. Worship involves, engages and challenges pupils, with prayer an important part of school and home life. As a result, they understand The Holy Trinity as 'God who created the world, Jesus who was born like a baby, died and is risen, and the Holy Spirit means we are loved'. They go on to show good religious literacy by saying, 'God looks after all of the people in the entire universe. Jesus loves everybody and keeps them in his hands because of course he is God. The Holy Spirit came down from the sky with special fire'. Well used interactive class reflective areas support pupils' spiritual development. Excellent examples include using the jar of blessings and 'saying sorry to God and he forgives us' by washing away wrong thoughts and actions inscribed on stones. Even the very youngest children are enabled to reflect like Jonah, inside a whale which is their class reflection area. Pupils are starting to lead worship, with adult

support and are 'very adept at writing prayers'. Currently, pupil evaluation on worship is gathered through talking to the children. In addition, parents complete evaluations. However, foundation governors and pupils recognise the importance of sharing their viewpoints as well as of extending pupil opportunities to lead worship, even for the very youngest children, so that the integrity and quality of collective worship continually enhance pupils' spiritual development.

The effectiveness of religious education is outstanding

Pupils clearly enjoy their religious education [RE] lessons in this school where RE is important and teaching and learning is consistently of a high standard. The progress of the children is very good in relation to age related expectations. They are aware of their targets and know how to improve in their work. Marking indicates reflective comments which pupils readily respond to. RE is well led and managed with termly tracking and assessment of pupils' progress well established. Children talk confidently and knowledgeably of the Christian narrative as well as 'talking about other faiths and how they pray'. Pupils experience the symbolism of baptism when a pupil 'wanted to be part of God's family' in St Alphege Church. They are enabled to understand what confirmation means in their own words. Children are encouraged to reflect and think about their learning. Good examples include Year 2 pupils who are able to reflect on the Jewish festival of Hanukkah whilst the youngest children, including nursery children, learn about obedience to God in the story of the fiery furnace. They explain this as being brave and standing up for what is right. All pupils experience the excellent use of artefacts and challenging activities which enrich pupil learning. However, the school acknowledges the need to deepen pupils' learning by devoting time for pupils to explore challenging questions of faith and life with adults, including the school chaplain, as well as explore the meaning of Ascension and Pentecost.

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

This school's Christian foundation is effectively promoted by the headteacher's own strong Christian commitment and vision, supported by the staff and governors. It is also welcomed by pupils and parents so that the Anglican foundation is celebrated and secure. Parents speak highly of how their children's needs and abilities are well met and how the wellbeing of pupils is given the highest priority. Collective worship and RE have an equally high status. Parents speak highly of this close knit community, saying all the children and staff know each other very well. They appreciate the level of care for their young children, valuing this sense of security and say they too feel welcome. The children have a voice through the school council, making suggestions for charity fundraising. Areas from the last inspection have been addressed, showing how the school has moved on, with clear priorities for future action. Many of the governors are new, but view this an exciting time in the life of the school at the beginning of the next part of its journey. Consequently, the school held a re-visioning day in May in partnership with the junior school. As a result, the school's distinctive Christian character is discussed at every governing body meeting. The school's Christian ethos is embedded across the board, permeating all aspects of school life'. This raises its status with new and experienced governors alike. However, they are all committed to monitoring the performance of the school and to embedding this monitoring with the school's values. Staff in this urban infant school take on many roles and responsibilities and appreciate the training and support offered to them by the diocese. Staff new to post are mentored and supported. Community links are strong, with excellent examples including the school's attendance on Remembrance Sunday. It was notable that an ex-serviceman was touched by the sensitivity shown by pupils placing poppies on the war memorial that he was 'proud to have the school associated with the church'. The school also features in the parish magazine, with information about school events, communicating news and events for the town. This raises the school's profile and shows how the school works hard to reflect its Christian foundation through its commitment to serving the children of St Alphege Infants and their families.

