



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

### Orchards Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Cherry Road  
Wisbech  
PE13 3NP

**Diocese: Ely**

Local authority: Cambridgeshire

Dates of inspection: 29.9.14

Date of last inspection: 25.1.10

School's unique reference number: 133782

Headteacher: Nicola Parker

Inspector's name and number: Anna Reeder 659

#### School context

Orchards is a large and growing primary school with a nursery attached. It currently has 447 children. A building project is underway as the school moves from a two form to a three form entry. The school serves an estate to the north of Wisbech in an area of high deprivation. The school has a higher than average number of pupils with English as an additional language, and this population continues to grow. Since the last inspection a new head teacher and deputy have been appointed. They have been in post for two academic years, and have refreshed the relationship with the local church

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Orchards as a Church of England school are satisfactory

The school's Christian ethos underpins the life of the school and manifests itself in a community that cares greatly about every individual's needs. As a result, pupils at the school enjoy their learning. Learners feel secure and happy. Staff in the school feel well-supported, and are excellent role models.

#### Areas to improve

- Firmly establish monitoring and self- evaluation systems for the school, as a church school, particularly by foundation governors, to measure impact of changes and to ensure strategic development, using the Diocese as a means of advice and support.
- Develop evaluation of collective worship using pupil and staff voice to gain a deeper understanding of what has the most impact on their lives.
- Develop ways of communicating with parents about the school's updated core values to enable families to build on the positive growth in spiritual understanding at home

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

Orchards school is a school where all are made to feel welcome. Acceptance and inclusion are part of the fabric of the school, and this is based for some on deep Christian care. The school's values and vision have been recently updated and the core principle of seeing children as uniquely precious and valued as individuals is lived out every day. The school's effective well-being team are passionate about supporting the children in school who need additional social or emotional support. They work closely with families to make a difference to the children's lives. One parent told me that her son wouldn't be in school at all without their help. They 'go the extra mile.' Teachers speak about how 'Our children have a deep understanding of what these Christian values mean and can relate them to their real life situations.' A child told me that 'We learn about our values in school and in RE lessons. I'm starting to share and think about them at home.' Children can make the link between these values and how they live out their lives in school. The school's behaviour policy is rooted in reconciliation and forgiveness and a child spoke clearly about the fresh start he is allowed when things go wrong. The school's prospectus and website information makes it clear that Orchards is a church school. The school environment with its vibrant religious education displays around the corridors and its core values displays in all classrooms reinforces the fact that this is a Church School, and proclaims that RE has a key part in the school's curriculum. Children were all able to talk about the values display in their room and what it meant to them on a personal level. The school has a welcoming, calm and purposeful environment with a focus on learning. Attainment has been low for the children, but progress is improving rapidly.

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

Worship plays an important part in the school day, and is seen by the majority as a key learning time alongside lessons. The children and staff come in to collective worship singing together. This creates a purposeful and calm start. A new appointment who sees himself as a 'minister for music' has ensured that music plays a key role in the development of spirituality in the school. Effort and thoughtful planning ensure that music underpins the key messages and values being explored in worship. This role has been expanded by the leadership team recently as the impact of music as a tool for worship was noted and is valued. The children sang 'Calm me Lord' which was very fitting as some families had experienced a tumultuous start to the day. The effect of singing on these children was profound and immediate. Worship themes are planned for a term and are centred on Christian values such as perseverance and compassion. The leadership team and incumbent work together to plan and review the termly themes. Children and class teachers plan for the termly assemblies and church services that they lead. The incumbent talked of a conscious decision to use biblical stories as a tool to develop children's understanding of the Christian faith, and he has produced a thoughtful guidance document for staff. Children develop their understanding of the themes through bible stories, prayer and discussion. They can relate the value's place in their own lives; a child spoke about how it was 'not good to avoid someone having some trouble' later in the day, having listened to the story of the Good Samaritan in the morning. Pupils listen attentively and answer thoughtfully in worship. The school attend the local church St Augustine's for services throughout the year, and these are very well attended by parents. A member of staff talked about how worship is the 'living, breathing gospel, where you can feel the presence of God.' The incumbent leads worship on a weekly basis now, and this has been enabled by the headteacher offering encouragement and being enthusiastic about working in partnership with the church. He feels more positive about the relationship between the church and school than ever before.

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

Parents speak warmly of the new headteacher and deputy. 'They remain calm and listen, whatever happens.' They are seen to be responsive to concerns or worries, and communicate effectively about events in school. The leadership team articulate a Christian vision. Recruitment and induction procedures are effective in explaining the school's Christian character and new appointments talked about how the pastoral care the school offers is

embedded. A clear focus has been on rebuilding links with the parish church and making the incumbent feel welcomed and valued in school. The school has also encouraged growing involvement by other faith groups, Christian denominations and community groups in school which has allowed the children to develop a positive view of what the church and faith can offer. The headteacher knows her school well in terms of an accurate and detailed self-evaluation of its academic progress and in the identification of the key issues for improvement in relation to achievement but has not yet tied the development of ethos in the same detail, so that the school can measure how its core Christian values play a role in raising standards. Foundation Governors have not yet developed an effective self-evaluation process for the school as a church school. Work on core values, collective worship and the school vision has brought about improvement, but it is not yet quantifiable by an evaluation process involving the different groups making up the school community. Improving standards has been and is continuing to be a key focus for the school.

SIAMS report September 2014 Orchards VC Primary School Wisbech PE13 3NP