



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### Dereham Church Infant and Nursery School

St Withburga Lane  
Dereham, Norfolk  
NR19 1ED

#### Diocese: Norwich

Local authority: Norfolk

Dates of inspection: 30 June 2014

Date of last inspection: 14 May 2009

School's unique reference number: 121195

Headteacher: Karen Gay

Inspector's name and number: Marion Betts 220

#### School context

Dereham Church Infant and Nursery School is an average-sized infant school which caters for children aged 3 to 7 years. It serves the local community of the small market town of Dereham. The majority of children are of White British heritage with a small number from a wide range of other cultural backgrounds. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The parish church is located next to the school. The leadership of the school especially by the headteacher has remained consistent for a number of years.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Dereham Church Infant and Nursery School are outstanding.

- The leadership of the headteacher powerfully promotes the Christian vision and values of the school which ensures that they are embedded into policy and practice.
- The very strong emphasis placed on care, respect and supporting each other impacts very positively on the well-being of each member of the school community.
- Very strong links are made with the Anglican church and other Christian groups which demonstrates to all the Christian distinctiveness of the school.
- The use of children's own enquiries and ideas is highly effective in promoting their RE learning.

#### Areas to improve

- Raise the consistency of the quality of RE teaching across all classes by ensuring appropriate differentiation of tasks so all children make good progress during lessons.
- Evaluate RE learning through the use of children's views and improvement ideas.

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

The children enjoy their school life particularly the fun activities planned and the extra-curricular experiences provided. They praise the care of the staff and mention how safe they feel at school. The pastoral care of the school is very good with each child's individual needs and interests known and supported. The Christian values promoted and the school rules devised by the children, powerfully impact on their personal development and behaviour. Children's spiritual development is enhanced by a wide range of activities particularly through creative art, and their enthusiasm and interest for growing flowers and vegetables in the garden. Children are involved in school decision making and are eloquent and confident when expressing their thoughts and views. The result being that children's personal, spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. The children are beginning to be aware of diverse communities through the creative art week activities that focus on another country's culture. Last year an Indian family and school child were involved in the planning and presentation. The children have a considerable curiosity about other traditions and faiths. Through their RE discussions and learning this subject contributes very well to the school's Christian ethos. The school raises money for Christian charities and the children learn about the difficulties other communities face. The children enter Reception with skills well below those expected for their age. They achieve good progress reaching broadly average attainment and above by the end of Year 2. Vulnerable children are supported well and also make sound progress during their time at the school. Relationships and respect between all staff and children are very good and demonstrate the school's Christian values in action. The school is characterised by good teamwork, praise used effectively, and by a positive sense of well-being.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective worship is regarded by the whole school community as a central part of each day. It is paramount in reinforcing Christian values and extremely important to staff and children who regard it as affirming a sense of the school's whole community. Creative delivery using imaginative visual prompts and drama engage the children's interest and contribute to their understanding of the message or learning. Children say that the values taught and the reflection time given to apply the learning to themselves, impacts their behaviour and actions. They can relate the Bible story linked to these expectations. Hence worship makes a powerful contribution to defining pupils' attitudes. Themes are very well planned incorporating events of the Church's year. At these times services are held in the church with parents and the congregation invited. Children enjoy worship especially the singing and when they lead or are involved in the presentation. The children are offered a rich variety of worship experiences by a range of worship leaders including teachers, members of the local church and other Christian churches and groups. Worship develops very well pupils' understanding of the Anglican faith and has a set pattern of liturgical elements. Collective worship is well monitored by governors, staff, and children with improvements being made following from these evaluations. For example a child suggested an additional theme of "Bible stories from around the world" and this has been included in next year's planning. Children are confident to talk about God and the stories of Jesus. They identify the Holy Spirit as within the blessing given to them by clergy and extra understanding is promoted around Pentecost. The children view prayer as an important aspect of school life. They are confident to deliver their own impromptu prayers in response to the worship message as well as to write prayers to share at the quiet reflective area. They are beginning to understand the purposes and variety of prayers.

**The effectiveness of the religious education (RE) is good**

RE is an important subject in the school demonstrated by its strong links with collective worship, by the quality of the RE displays, by its priority focus by the governing body and

within the school development plan, and by the headteacher taking the role of RE subject leader. It reflects well the Christian character of the school and contributes effectively to children's personal and spiritual development. RE gives children many opportunities to discuss their own religious ideas resulting in their growing confidence to explain their thoughts and opinions. This was demonstrated when children designed a space where they would feel close to God which inspired the form of the new reflective outside garden. Many lessons and topics use children's own curiosity as a starting point. The "I wonder" questions very effectively motivate children's interest to discover further knowledge and understanding. For example one lesson observed built on one child's curiosity about prayers connected to other faiths. Using an unexplained picture of Buddhist prayer flags, the children were enthused to discover more about this topic. Teaching is overall good with some outstanding features observed. When teaching was best, enquiry based stimulus powerfully motivated independent learning, and practical activities extended or consolidated their understanding. Some lessons were not sufficiently differentiated for all children to make sound progress. Monitoring by governors and staff regularly takes place but the children's ideas of RE strengths and weaknesses are not yet sought. The school has designed RE assessment procedures for all their children including those in the early year's classes. The majority of children are making good progress in RE with attainment currently in line with national expectations and some achieving a higher grade. The RE curriculum is planned well with a variety of first hand experiences and many creative tasks linked to other curriculum subjects particularly Art and ICT. The children enjoy their RE activities immensely. For example the Reception children were enthusiastically preparing to go on a pilgrimage to the church.

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

The strong leadership of the headteacher, governors and staff powerfully articulates and promotes an explicitly Christian vision of care, respect and concern for all which pervades the school life. Governors are extremely proactive in promoting the school as a church school. Through the governors' Church Foundation committee they have evaluated and ensured the best provision is being made for the children's spiritual development. The impact of this can be demonstrated by the well used and extremely attractive reflective outside space and the centrality of the Bishop's visit during the centenary celebrations. Governors' strategic planning has ensured that committed Christian personnel are linked to the school community, has provided a budget for church school improvements, and promoted the future leadership of church schools by encouraging extensive staff and governor training. Recent training for the whole school staff has taken place focusing on teaching using an enquiry approach with the revised agreed Norfolk syllabus delivered by a diocesan RE adviser. This has impacted very well on RE teaching methods. All staff are fully committed to the school's expectation of their role in this Christian community. They feel highly appreciated for their work and are very supportive of each other both professionally and personally. The links with the church are very strong and understood by the whole school community as a high priority distinctive feature. Clergy and other members provide active support for example by running a weekly Christian lunchtime club. The church building is used frequently to accommodate the school and its parent body, as well as providing an extra resource for RE and other curriculum learning. The school has fully achieved the development issues from the last church school inspection. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and especially enjoy the sessions when they work alongside their children with craft activities. They appreciate the approachability of the headteacher and staff. Links with the diocese are strong demonstrated by the school undertaking diocesan activities such as the Lent Prayer Chain and being often asked to pilot new projects and mentor new church school leaders.