



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### **Stretton Sugwas Church of England Academy**

Stretton Sugwas

Hereford

HR4 7AE

**Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Herefordshire**

Local authority: N/A

Date of inspection: 21 May 2015

Date of last inspection: 15 June 2010

School's unique reference number: 116849

Headteacher: Alex Davies

Inspector's name and number: Angela Daniel 757

#### **School context**

There are 127 pupils on roll which is a 22% increase in the last five years. The school converted to become an academy school on 31 August 2012. The headteacher has been in post since September 2013. A deputy headteacher and new coordinators for mathematics and special educational needs have been appointed since April 2014. Almost all pupils are white British. Nearly one third of the children are from families with a parent in the armed forces.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Stretton Sugwas Academy as a Church of England school are outstanding**

- Every member of this community rejoices in being part of a nurturing and effective school where Christian values are clearly understood and sincerely lived out daily
- The school uses technology innovatively and creatively to celebrate its Christian purpose and practice
- Worship is a source of spiritual growth and religious understanding; its impact is evident in relationships of trust and mutual support
- Religious Education (RE) has a vital role in the school curriculum and there is a commitment to high standards for all pupils

#### **Areas to improve**

- Plan more opportunities and experiences, particularly in RE and worship, so that pupils leave school with a clear understanding of the diversity and difference within the church and within other faith communities
- Enable pupils to confidently plan and lead whole acts of worship in order for them to develop a better understanding of the various aspects of Christian worship.

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

The school's Christian character is evident in every aspect of its doing and being. The school motto is, 'Each bee plays a part in the hive' which the headteacher explains, on the welcome page of the school's website, 'underpins the school's belief that each of us is part of the body of Christ'. Bees are featured on the school badge, the school owns bee hives, the children are involved in making honey and the classes are named after types of bee. It is with great ingenuity, creativity and intent that the school has taken this theme and uses it as a powerful image and theme for articulating and understanding the school's Christian values. A child spoke quite incidentally that 'all of us make God here'. The analogy is both simple and profound. There is a very explicit and tangible connection between Bible teaching, Christian values and the daily lives of all in this school community. A school display takes on the title, 'Bee what God wants you to be'. It includes a jar into which a child places a pebble each time they have been recognised to be putting a Christian value into practice. Staff have excellent theological understanding enabling children to easily make links between belief and behaviour. Adults and children in the school are appreciative of the high levels of trust, openness and care that pervade because each individual is considered to be precious and valued. Everyone is secure enough to be vulnerable; they are willing to share their own deep thoughts, ideas and feelings. This is evident in RE, circle times, on the website, amongst staff and the wider school community. The special educational needs policy states that 'there is something wonderful in everyone'. Reflective and thoughtful children with high levels of emotional security and high self-esteem learn and achieve well. The shared understanding of 'equality through diversity' leads to excellent personalised teaching and fulfilling outcomes for every child. The staff are full of enthusiasm and imagination. They share their various expertise to provide exciting ways for the children to express their spiritual understanding and ideas through the arts and technology. Codes on displays which can be read by computer tablets, allow the children to explain their responses to RE and worship, for example thoughts about Rogation Day. There is an overwhelming sense of unity and cohesion about the school's Christian values. Families with a member in the armed forces describe feeling a sense of acceptance and belonging very quickly. The padre is a foundation governor. Pupils, parents and visitors are in no doubt about what informs the schools' approach to living and learning.

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

Collective worship is a vital and valued part of each school day. It is a time of peace, affirmation and encouragement that prepares everyone for the day ahead and is a reminder of the Christian values that inform living and learning. Children across the school can readily recall Bible stories that have been used to unpack a value, such as friendship and the story of The Good Samaritan. As a result the community aspires to live out Christian teaching to the extent of putting the needs of others first. Worship is led predominantly by school staff which means that there is great strength in continuity and there is the freedom within planning to be instinctive and creative. Worship is rarely led by visitors other than the incumbent. The children do not therefore experience a variety of Christian viewpoints. Children really enjoy worship and confidently contribute, for example by leading prayers, although they do not have the opportunity to plan and lead complete acts of worship. Staff draw on a wide range of resources to inspire worship and draw on their own knowledge of relevant bible stories and teaching. The youngest children can confidently make connections with their own lives and are given time to reflect and respond. Worship is given real value and worth. Prayer is central to the spiritual life of the school. The 'Worship and Prayer Life' tab on the school's website includes a 'Prayer Request' box which is used regularly by parents, pupils and other members of the community. 'School is like our very own church' said one boy. The school's ease and confidence in relation to worship and prayer is infectious. High standards of technology reinforce the overwhelming feeling that worship and prayer are cool. The school's integrity and sincerity with regards to worship encourage whole-hearted support and involvement. The local churches and school work successfully together to enrich the worship of this school community. Services to celebrate major Christian festivals are supported very well by parents. The school signposts families to special church services such as the Remembrance Sunday for the whole community. The school is like honey, adding something very special and edifying to the lives of those who are part of the hive.

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

RE is a very important strand of education in the school. It weaves with collective worship to anchor worship in a firm knowledge and understanding of Christian teaching. It also binds the school's Christian values to their origins in the Bible. In addition, there is a rigour about standards, progress and attainment that place RE at the core of the school's curriculum. The seamless experience for children between worship and the teaching of Christianity in RE is powerful. Children are enabled to grow very effectively in knowledge, spiritually and socially because of these planned links. In RE lessons based on the story of Pentecost there were creative and age-appropriate opportunities for personal response, reinforced also in worship. Teachers of RE are skilled and confident. They plan exciting and inspirational activities which enable every child to be supported and challenged appropriately. A year 1 and year 2 lower-ability group thoroughly enjoyed asking John, the puppet, questions such as, 'Can God bring love down from heaven?' Teachers ask challenging questions orally and through marking in order to be able to inform assessments of the children's understanding. Consequently, there are high expectations and clear evidence of individual progress and age-appropriate progression in books. The local church enhances learning in RE. The incumbent is effervescent and well known to the children. Reception children recall a recent visit to the church when they shared their own important messages from the pulpit. The teaching and learning of faiths other than Christianity is meaningful when it falls into a planned RE topic area. However, there are few sustained blocks of teaching about faiths other than Christianity and year 6 pupils have gaps in their understanding. The year 5 multi-faith day makes an excellent contribution to the children's cultural development. The school has demonstrated its commitment to the importance of RE by applying for and achieving an RE Quality Mark. The RE leader has galvanised the school's inherent enthusiasm for this subject and through careful self-evaluation and action ensures that attainment and progress is outstanding for all children.

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

The leadership of the school at every level is committed to the school's Christian vision and purpose. The governing body made it their priority to appoint a Headteacher who would build upon well-established Christian principles and practice. They have remained consistent, offering guidance through times of change to ensure that the school has continued to thrive as an outstanding church school. Governors' meetings begin with prayers and full governors' meetings always include aspects of self-evaluation and action plans in terms of being and becoming a vibrant church school. The Headteacher in turn is recruiting wisely to strengthen the school's capacity to deliver an excellent education in which children flourish in every way. A recent advertisement requires the applicant 'to follow and lead the Christian values and ethos of the school'. The appointment of a Deputy Headteacher has been of immense significance in terms of the school's confidence in being boldly Christian. He has a wonderfully charismatic personality; full of infectious joy and enthusiasm. His skills in building the school's incredible website and in nurturing all staff as teachers and people are crucial to the school's success. Every member of staff thrives because they are allowed to 'bee' themselves. The school office staff are deeply appreciated by parents who are given time to talk and be listened to. School systems are meticulously and creatively in place. Above all, time and space are created for this to truly be a people place where the best is expected and given for each person. The school is eager for children to 'broaden their horizons' and be prepared for life in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain, although more could be done to facilitate this. Every aspect of school life is shared openly and fully with families. They delight in being able to share what their child has been learning by watching videos on the website, by celebrating the successes of different children and by being able to share prayers and blogs. The Headteacher and all the staff are dedicated second-milers who fulfil their Christian responsibility to love and serve.

SIAMS report May 2015 Stretton Sugwas Church of England Academy, Hereford HR4 7AE