



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Great Ponton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Mill Lane
Great Ponton
Grantham
Lincolnshire
NG 33 5DT

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Lincoln

Local authority: Lincolnshire

Date of inspection: 11 June 2015

Date of last inspection: June 2010

School's unique reference number: 120602

Headteacher: Jon Clack

Inspector's name and number: Lizzie McWhirter 244

School context

Great Ponton is a small, growing rural primary school near Grantham. There are 68 pupils on roll, who are almost all from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is slightly higher than average due to high mobility. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is below the national average. The parish church of Holy Cross is within walking distance of the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Great Ponton as a Church of England school are good

- The strong sense of a nurturing and inclusive Christian family community, underpinned by core Christian values, ensures everyone feels accepted.
- Strong leadership and good governance ensures the Christian character of the school permeates all school life.
- The supportive Christian environment which enables positive attitudes amongst the pupils to life and learning. As a result they become confident individuals and are well prepared for life.

Areas to improve

- Governors to embed the systematic monitoring of religious education [RE] so as to be better informed about this key aspect of Christian distinctiveness in an aided school.
- Deepen pupils' understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith and their encounter with people of other faiths to enhance their learning and their spiritual and cultural development.
- Enable pupils to grow in their understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit to nurture their worshipping life and their spiritual development.

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

This small, rural primary school ensures the importance of a Christian family community is at the heart of everything it does. Its nurturing and inclusive Christian environment enables everyone to feel accepted. This is because the school's happy community is rooted in the Christian faith and the school's Anglican heritage. Pupils can explain the school's chosen core values of trust, respect, friendship, hope, wisdom and peace in their own words. Good examples include the message of hope to 'believe in yourself'. Pupils go on to praise the staff of this small school, saying 'the teachers have more time with you to help strengthen your weaknesses'. Great Ponton's pupils understand the importance of family and want to come to school as they feel safe and well cared for. They trust their teachers and receive wisdom from them. Their friends are here and they respect everything in school because they know their boundaries. Consequently, attendance is good and never below the national average. Great Ponton accepts pupils who may have experienced difficulties in other schools. Given the high mobility of families in the area, the staff understand the children's starting points. They demonstrate the ethos of care for those new to the school and affirm that parents have made the right choice. This school is very good at working with vulnerable children, giving time and support to those with special needs. In addition, specialist staff are employed to work with children and their families within a spirit of co-operation and mutual trust. All achievement is celebrated in a culture which acknowledges all learning and where a variety of extra-curricular activities develop a range of skills. These include cricket and other sporting competitions as well as residential visits. Such activities enable children from this small school to socialise with children from other schools. Pupils feel able to make a positive contribution to school life and experience the Christian values of service and generosity through their charitable works. Such values enhance their understanding of their place in the world and their Christian responsibility to others. Pupils show respect for different cultures and communities through their RE and worship. Their understanding is enriched by visits to places of worship, which includes their own parish church, Holy Cross, as well as Lincoln Cathedral. Such experiences strongly support pupils' spiritual and cultural development. However, pupils say they would like to know more about Christian communities in other countries. They see this as a natural extension to the work the school does to support a school in Uganda through the Lifestraw project work as well as their fundraising for Sierra Leone. Pupils value their school grounds with its outdoor classroom. They use the outdoor environment to 'reflect and take a moment if we are feeling upset or frustrated. It's a good place to go to take a breather'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship involves and genuinely engages pupils at Great Ponton, making a good contribution to their spiritual development. This is because worship is recognised as an important part of the school day and follows the Christian year, with a focus on the school's chosen six core values. Adults, including parents value collective worship. The vicar is in school regularly and leads worship most weeks. Pupils find worship in their parish church 'a more exciting place to worship'. Key festivals, such as Harvest, Christmas and Easter are celebrated in Holy Cross Church. Pupils enjoy doing readings in church and writing their own prayers, which have been encapsulated in a prayer book for use by the whole school. This was a project for Spring 2015. Pupils say they would like to have worship outdoors 'as when you are sitting outside, you see the world that God made'. Pupils also say they would like to be more involved in planning and leading worship. Within this family school community, evaluation of worship is gathered from pupils who are interested to stay behind after worship and share their views. Pupils are growing in their understanding of The Holy Trinity. They speak of God as 'our Father, always watching over us and you can talk to him. Jesus is like a teacher, he's the Light of the World. The Holy

Spirit helps us to know that God is with us'. The school recognises the need to help develop pupils' understanding of God as Father, Son and Spirit as an integral part of their daily worshipping life.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE has a high profile at Great Ponton. This is because the headteacher is the RE subject leader. He enjoys, and is enthusiastic about, teaching RE. As this is a small school, he teaches RE to the majority of the school. Consequently, teaching and learning is consistently good and progress is in line with other core subjects. Tracking and assessment are in place. Pupils say they enjoy RE and are aware of their targets and know how to improve in their work. They are given time to reflect and respond in lessons, supporting their spiritual development. They also work with their parents on researching new material to present to the school. Good examples include posters on Hindu deities displayed in the school hall. However, the school acknowledges that an area which is currently under developed is the monitoring of RE by governors to ensure they know more about the outcomes for all groups and individuals in RE. Vulnerable children are supported by additional staff in classes. Pupils ask important questions about religion, including 'Who made God?' Pupils ask enquiring questions about Hindu worship, beliefs and practice. However, the school acknowledges the need for pupils to meet people of other faiths as part of their programme of visits and visitors. Pupils can relate the Christian narrative well, especially the Christmas and Easter story. However, they are less secure in their knowledge of Ascension, Pentecost and Trinity.

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

Great Ponton's headteacher and governors have a strong Christian vision for the school. Consequently, the school's core Christian values are central to the strategic direction of the school. All areas from the previous inspection have been addressed. RE and worship are well led, managed and resourced and meet statutory requirements. Governors regularly discuss pupil progress and relate this to their Christian values, such as respect and forgiveness. However, governors recognise the importance of monitoring RE in a more systematic and rigorous way to ensure they are informed about this key area of Christian distinctiveness in an Aided school. Furthermore, foundation governors are keen to support pupils in their own spiritual journeys by discussing key concepts, such as trinity, with them. In addition they seek to enrich pupils' experience of church worship by enabling school worship to take place in other local churches. The school takes part in the Christingle service at Stoke Rochford every December. In addition, the school annually attends the Church School Festival, giving all Year 6 pupils the chance to participate in worship at Lincoln Cathedral. Governors promote the wellbeing of children and adults. They support the professional development of staff, mindful of succession planning and valuing training and support from the diocese. Pupils have a voice and are encouraged to express themselves and are given responsibilities. Parents praise the excellent relationship the headteacher has with the pupils. They speak highly of the way he is 'always there to help and guide' as he wants the pupils to succeed. However, whilst there are trophies and awards for children's achievements, there is currently no award for RE. Links with the local community are good, with the school using the village hall for functions such as the Christmas plays. In addition, the choir sing for the elderly of the village at Christmas. Parents firmly believe the values which this school models prepare their children for life.