



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Hob Hill Church of England/Methodist Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Amitage Lane
Brereton
Rugeley
Staffordshire
WS15 1ED

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Staffordshire

Date of inspection: 11 September 2014

Date of last inspection: 15 July 2009

School's unique reference number: 124291

Headteacher: Mr Ben Preston

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Lizzie McWhirter MA 244

School context

Hob Hill Primary School is unique in that it is Staffordshire's only combined Church of England and Methodist School. It enjoys close links with the parish church of St Michael's as well as Brereton Methodist Chapel. Currently there are 229 pupils on roll, who are almost all from a White British background. The headteacher has been in post since 2007 and has built up a new leadership team around him in this school which has experienced significant staff changes in the last eighteen months.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hob Hill as a Church of England/Methodist school are good

- The welcoming and inclusive family community, grounded in the Christian values, expressed in the 'Be Attitudes' and embodied by everyone in the motto 'Be Hob Hill'.
- The school's supportive Christian environment which develops positive attitudes and enables pupils to become confident learners and achieve well.
- Flourishing partnerships between the church and school, valued by everyone, whether or not they are a member of a local Christian community.

Areas to improve

- Enhance the evaluation and pupil ownership of collective worship to ensure best quality worship at all times.
- Establish a forum for pupils and clergy to discuss together the key Christian concepts important to Anglicans and Methodists alike, such as trinity and covenant.
- Ensure this school's distinctive Christian character maintains a high profile at every governing body meeting, so that evidence of the explicit link between pupil learning and the school's Christian character is securely gathered, thus meeting all pupils' needs.

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

Hob Hill Primary School provides an inspiring and exciting learning environment where pupils 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 what it means to 'Be Hob Hill'. The school's 'Be Attitudes' alongside the school's chosen values are integral to this vision where everyone ascribes to the 'Be Hob Hill' ethos. Such values include *koinonia*, which pupils describe as 'friendship' and *agape*, which they articulate as 'Christian love'. Pupils go on to say, 'we are all one big family. We try not to fall out with each other and we all love each other'. This is reflected in the powerful image of the cartwheel displayed with Christ at the hub of the community and the spokes representing the school's core values. Data shows that pupils achieve high results against national expectations, with some pupils making significant progress. This is because the school takes the approach of working *with* families and this, together with the motivational learning attitudes and styles with good teaching and teamwork ensures pupils' needs are met. The school's success can be summed up in the motto, 'Be Hob Hill', which is seen as 'a catalyst for every success in school as it embodies what the school means to everyone'. The school's positive approach to attendance, with the encouragement to 'Be Here' to be a full member of the family is very successful. There have been very few exclusions. Behaviour is very good, with children experiencing the school's values of compassion and forgiveness in action as part of Hob Hill's restorative and reflective approach. An excellent example is the comment used by pupils and adults alike, 'You're being so Hob Hill', enabling the school to model expectations in a positive way. The school's pastoral system, with time to talk to a dedicated member of staff as well as the positive play system to support children with emotional needs, valued by both parents and pupils, fosters academic progress. The encouragement to 'Be Hob Hill' inspires children to aim high. Targets to improve standards not only recognise the individuality of the children but also the underlying Christian belief which is rooted in a strong moral duty, giving children access to the best positive learning and curriculum potential in order to sustain progress. Displays throughout the school proudly focus on the school's core Christian values, with parents commenting that children are allowed to develop their own beliefs and relationships in order to support their spiritual development. Whilst many parents do not have strong religious views, they value the school 'promoting crucial life skills for the children'. Learning is aspirational here, not just academic, with a wide range of achievement valued, including music and sport. Pupils here feel able to make a positive contribution. Children's global awareness is richly enhanced by links with the Rwandan Methodist Church, whose Bishop has visited the school. Pupils show respect for diverse communities, through visits to local churches and Lichfield Cathedral, but especially through the long established partnership with Holy Trinity Primary School in inner city Birmingham. Hob Hill strongly promotes religious education [RE] with well-focussed and creative lessons which help pupils to investigate and reflect on key questions, widening their experiences within a growing awareness and understanding of God. RE is greatly enriched with the support of the clergy when pupils explore John Wesley's Rule and enhance their understanding of Methodism through Methodism Days held in the school and chapel. Pupils show a good knowledge of Christianity and the symbolism of the Eucharist, and can articulate key concepts, such as salvation and sacrifice. Pupils welcome exploring core Christian concepts, which are embraced by Methodists and Anglicans alike, such as covenant and trinity and discussing these with the clergy. Pupils value their school grounds, especially the newly established outdoor prayer trail, which encourages them to pause, reflect and ask key questions about their friends, achievement and links to other countries. Pupils' confidence is enhanced and personal and social development is nurtured by curriculum time spent in the forest.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The attitude of pupils to collective worship is good because the quality of worship which is offered to them is making a real difference in their lives, contributing greatly to their spiritual development. Worship is constantly linked to the school's values and the encouragement to 'Be Hob Hill'. All staff attend worship which is recognised as a vital part of the school day as it helps to build community. Pupils describe worship time as 'peaceful' with 'time to talk to God and ask him questions'. They make links between Jesus' teaching in The Bible and everyday situations, recalling the message in the story of Jonah

to be obedient and *'not run away from God'*. Worship involves, engages and challenges pupils. Prayer is an important part of school life, with pupils using the online prayer facility to request prayers for worship; together with the well-established prayer and reflection areas in every class, which are accessible at all times. Pupils say, *'we use our prayer areas to look at The Bible, read prayers, say thank you and pray in times of trouble'*. A good example is *'our prayer tree, giving guidance from God. Just before lunch or break we go and stand there and say our own little prayer'*. Parents *'love the fact that each classroom has its own prayer and reflection area as well as the group worship'*. Pupils show some understanding of the Trinitarian nature of God, explaining *'God helps create the world, Jesus helps us make the right choices and live the life we should and The Holy Spirit helps us believe in God and your religion'*. A small group of older children belong to the worship committee who plan and lead worship termly. In addition, the JC+Me Club, run by the clergy, is open to Year 2 pupils upwards, plan and lead services at key times in the church year, such as Easter. The parish priest and Methodist minister are both welcome and regular visitors to school, with clergy working together and both presiding at all the major church festivals. Pupils, parents and staff enjoy receiving a blessing whilst some receive bread and wine at the termly Eucharist. Collective worship is varied in its approach, encouraging children to become independent worshippers. Even the youngest children have been known to role play the headteacher leading worship. Pupils experience worship in their school, parish church or chapel, and welcome more worship outdoors. Worship highlights include key festivals in the church year, such as Ash Wednesday when pupils say *'we go up and get a blessing and have a cross on our forehead made out of old palm branches if we want to'*. Parents speak highly of enjoying Harvest, Christmas and Remembrance as well as First Friday celebrations when *'we see the wider family of the school involved'*. Parents go on to say that school is like an extension of their family and value coming to services even if their children are not involved. Currently, pupil evaluation on worship and pupil involvement is gathered several times a year to inform future planning. For example, pupils expressed enjoyment in going to church, hearing stories from The Bible and singing worship songs. The Methodist foundation of being *'born in song'* is lived out in practice. Foundation governors and pupils alike recognise the importance of sharing these viewpoints as well as extending pupil opportunities to lead worship, so that its integrity and quality and continually enhance pupils' spiritual development.

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

Hob Hill's Christian foundation is effectively promoted by the vision and dedication of the headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher, together with the clergy and governors. It is also welcomed by staff, parents and pupils so that the unique joint Anglican/Methodist foundation is celebrated and secured. Parents praise the fact that their children's needs and abilities are well met. They go on to say that children's progress has improved, year on year, noting that the children have become more confident and positive, building their self-esteem and sense of responsibility. Parents speak highly of the strong community feeling of *'togetherness'*, with supportive and approachable teachers who show sympathy and understanding and *'know the children's names even before they start here'*. Collective worship and RE have an equally high status in school as the headteacher holds this important portfolio. Governors are strongly committed to the school's development plan where the school's distinctive Christian character has its own section, with defined areas for development. A rigorous system of monitoring and self-evaluation is now in place, with annual objectives and greater clarity. This, together with the renewed vision and enthusiasm for the Christian club and the involvement of pupils in leading class worship, shows how the school has moved on since the last inspection. However, foundation governors welcome ensuring that church school distinctiveness is a standing item each time they meet in order to raise this important profile with their fellow governors. Currently they are not explicitly linking data to the school's distinctive Christian character, but are keen to put this in place. Pupils have a voice through the school council. The diocese and the Methodist circuit provide pastoral support for the school community as well as contributing to the school's self-evaluation and strategic development. A good example is enabling the deputy headteacher to attend the diocesan *'Vision to Lead'* course. In all these ways, the school works hard and is committed to serving Hob Hill's children and their families.