



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### St Margaret's Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Junior School

Orchard Street,  
Rainham,  
Gillingham,  
Kent,  
ME8 9AE

Previous SIAS grade: **Outstanding**

Diocese: **Rochester**

Local authority: **Medway**

Date of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2014

Date of last inspection: 16<sup>th</sup> October 2009

School's unique reference number: 118699

Headteacher: Paul Gabbett

Inspector's name and number: Pamela Draycott 161

#### School context

St Margaret's is a large Church of England voluntary controlled junior school serving an urban area. Its pupils are drawn mainly from the infant school, on the same site, which is not a Church school. The percentage with special educational needs or for whom pupil premium funding is received due to social disadvantage is higher than average. Attendance is excellent and is in the top 20% of schools nationally. Most pupils leave having made good progress. St Margaret's prides itself on providing a 'secure and caring environment in which aspiration and achievement are promoted to all within a community bounded by faith and friendship'.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Margaret's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The prominence given to the school's inclusive Christian ethos and values as a driving force for school development which is effectively linked to good standards, high aspiration and a commitment to ensuring that all succeed.
- The clear vision of the Headteacher for the school as a voluntary controlled church school which is effectively shared by staff and governors.
- The very positive response of pupils to the wide range of opportunities offered for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development provided by the school within an overarching Christian framework.
- Attendance of 97% which is indicative of pupils' enjoyment of school and supportive of their academic progress.

#### Areas to improve

- Increase opportunities for the school community to deepen their theological understanding so that they can articulate their ideas about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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

St Margaret's is a distinctively Christian and inclusive school. Consequently, it successfully strives to ensure that its pupils develop well academically and personally. This includes encouraging pupils to take responsibility for themselves and for others and to show moral and social responsibility based on Jesus' teachings. As an expression of the school's Christian and inclusive values, pupils are very well cared for and lovingly supported so that they make good progress. The school celebrates a wide range of achievement. Therefore, it provides a balanced curriculum with a wide range of extra-curricular activities, trips and enrichment activities such as the school's 'values days'.

These successfully support its Christian ethos and contribute very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is seen as being in keeping with the school's Christian values which pupils and staff are able to speak about confidently. Religious education (RE) is regarded very positively by pupils who enjoy it and recognise the contribution it makes to helping them reflect on the significance of faith in the world and in their lives. As a result it makes a very good contribution to the school's Christian ethos. There are displays around school based on the school's twelve Christian values which provide a basis for its life and work. These are updated regularly and used often by pupils. The values are spoken of frequently during the school day and are explicitly linked to school policies such as its behaviour policy. These values contribute effectively to pupils' well-being, regardless of their ability or background. Strong and mutually supportive relationships based on respect reflect the school's Christian values positively. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they speak of the 'family feel' of the school and of its caring support of them. They link this explicitly and confidently with the school's Christian values which encourage tolerance and appreciation of difference and diversity.

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

Worship takes place daily with developed themes linked to explicit Christian values, the Church's year and to school priorities. It is very well planned which is an indication of the high importance placed on it by the school. Worship contributes very well to helping pupils to explore Christian values as well as moral and social issues focused on Biblical and Christian teachings. Pupils are involved in planning, leading and evaluating worship which means that they take some ownership of it and recognise its significance. Pupils and staff have positive attitudes towards worship which is valued and enjoyed. The quality and variety of worship, including the time spent in 'cluster groups' which contain pupils from all year groups, has a significant and positive impact on pupils' personal development. Worship contributes to their spiritual, moral and social development extremely well. Elements of Anglican worship such as lighting candles, the use of vesicles and responses and singing the Lord's Prayer are embedded and responded to very well by pupils. Reflection and prayer is important in school life. Opportunities for joining in with prayer and reflecting on spiritual issues takes place through worship and in the reflection areas in each classroom. There is also a 'spiritual garden', a quiet outdoor space, in the centre of the school. Pupils recognise the importance and relevance of reflection and prayer and see it as important to them and to their school. Worship is respectful, engaging and inclusive so that those of all faiths and none participate in and benefit from it. It reflects the school's inclusive Christian ethos well and enhances its 'family feel'. Pupils know about Biblical stories and are aware of key Christian beliefs, such as the importance of Jesus as the Son of God, that are explored well in worship. They show satisfactory understanding of more complex Christian concepts such as that of the Trinity.

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

The school's very strong, explicit Christian character is consistently promoted by the vision and dedication of the Headteacher and his staff, in partnership with governors. This is because of the positive support for its Christian values which are seen as the driving force for development. A robust monitoring and self-evaluation system focuses on meeting the needs of all and is in keeping with the school's Christian foundation. School leaders, including governors, have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. This shows itself in its accurate self-evaluation and strategic improvement planning which guides its progress. This plan includes an appropriate focus on continuing to develop St Margaret's as a Christian school serving its community. There are detailed plans in place to work collaboratively with other church schools in the area to secure and extend Christian service in education in the future. Governors are strongly committed to the school as an effective and distinctive voluntary controlled Church school. They are supportively challenging through their regular meetings and involvement in school life by, for example, having a 'SIAMS and worship' sub-committee. Arrangements for worship meet statutory requirements.

As part of the school's inclusive Christian ethos, it builds good relationships with families supporting its pupils, especially the most vulnerable, very well. The vicar from St Margaret's church is a regular visitor, leading worship weekly with the parish evangelist. This is an example of the good links between the school and the parish. The school is committed to the professional development of staff and commendably supports those who wish to develop their career within the church school sector or beyond. St Margaret's school is outward looking. This includes working well in partnership with the infant school on the same site, with other schools in the area and with the diocese of Rochester. As part of its service to the wider community, it hosts a Saturday music school and a playgroup for younger children.