



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

### **Cradley Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School**

#### **Diocese: Worcester**

LA: Dudley

Dates of Inspection: 1<sup>st</sup> May 2013

Date of Last Inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> October 2007

Schools Unique reference number: 103846

Headteacher: Mrs Marcia Harris

Inspectors name and number: Mrs Susan Helps 300

#### **School context**

Cradley Church of England Primary School is a very happy and highly successful voluntary aided school with 202 pupils. Although the area the school serves is urban, the Victorian building is set close to a park and the grounds of St Peter's church. The majority of the pupils are white British, with a small number of pupils from ethnic backgrounds. The school has very close links with the local church and is highly valued by its community. The building has been sensitively modernised but retains the intimacy of a small Victorian school. A forest school and well developed areas in the grounds provide the children with ample opportunity to work, play and worship outdoors.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Cradley CE Primary School as a Church of England School are outstanding.**

The head teacher has transformed the ethos by drawing together staff, parents, governors, and children to select the core Christian values that are evident 'within the walls'. The mantra 'every child, every chance, every day' permeates all aspects of school life with 'shine days' for all the children to celebrate their individual talents. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is 'threaded' through the life of the school and all stakeholders are proud of their school and its heritage.

#### **Established strengths**

- The leadership provided by the head teacher who has worked with governors, parents, staff and children to place carefully selected Christian values at the heart of school development
- The family atmosphere that draws in parents, members of the church and the local community, while at the same time reaching out to teachers and pupils in other parts of the world such as Tanzania and to members of other world faiths
- The religious education (RE) curriculum, the quality of teaching and learning in this subject and the enthusiasm of the RE subject leader
- Collective worship where there is a spiritual depth that touches children and adults alike.

#### **Focus for development**

- Embed the RE curriculum and celebrate the expertise within the school by becoming a 'beacon' for others
- Develop the Eucharist as an emerging strength within of school worship.

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

Regardless of their ability, all learners at Cradley are well supported in order that they achieve their potential academically. All identified groups are currently working above national expectations and pupils across all year groups by living and breathing the schools values thrive emotionally, socially and spiritually. Governors support families on free school meal where attendance is an issue by writing to them or meeting with them to bring about improvements. Children with special educational needs make good progress and are supported by very caring support staff. The schools outstanding moral,

spiritual, social, and cultural provision provides excellent opportunities for all children with regular family days out, for example to London and Weston-Super-Mare. The curriculum is vibrant and the school year is full of 'wow moments and wow days' with for example a visit to a Sikh Temple, a charity day for comic relief. A book at the front of the school provides an excellent record of a wide range of activities that the children have enjoyed and staff arrange various events and visits that enrich the children's experiences; for example Year 5 and 6 pupils' visit to an Islamic Centre and a trip by a group of teachers and children to a school in Tanzania. There is a 'tangible' highly developed interpretation of spirituality within the school with music used in RE lessons to calm and support reflection and Teaching Assistants speaking of the 'goose bumps' they have during worship. Due to the impact of Christian values the school's ethos is inclusive and children with very challenging behaviour are able to be successful. The award of a 'special' care pebble to a child with significant behaviour issues was celebrated by the whole school community during worship. Pebble Parties are a regular opportunity for all the children who 'live by the school values' to be recognised and individuals who have shown care, trust, or courage are rewarded. Everyone at Cradley has an opportunity to 'shine' with talent shows and praise assemblies. The extensively developed outdoor area is easily accessible to the children allowing them to explore, care for the environment and relish the 'beauty of God's world'. The hall, classrooms, corridors and shared areas have displays that celebrate the children's work, illustrate the core values, and enhance worship, for example the framed value collages hung around the school and the wisdom tree with leaves being placed at a very poignant interlude during worship.

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

Children understand the purpose of prayer and value its place in collective worship, for example a Year 6 child said she liked to pray as it helped her feel close to God. All classes have reflective areas and understand the importance of silence for prayer and contemplation. Holding crosses are available in every class to either support prayer or to provide comfort. Worship is regarded positively by all learners with all classes leading into the hall in silence and pupils with challenging behaviour going out of their way to demonstrate their knowledge of the core values. Children, adults and governors have helped with the self-evaluation of this important time in the school day and as a result worship is engaging, involves the children and has a clear structure. The parish priest is developing a Eucharist service for children in Year 6 and these pupils appreciate their service will evolve and is 'a gift' to those that follow them who will further develop the format and structure. The local church is an important venue for worship and even the very youngest children feel comfortable there, being given opportunities by their teacher to explore this important space. Worship is planned around core Christian values and a scheme has been adapted and expanded creatively to link with the children's interests and life experiences. A Year 3 child compared the drama of the two women seeking Solomon's wisdom with 'The Jeremy Kyle Show' thus indicating how relevant this story was to him. Liturgical colours, opening greetings and orders of service are based on Anglican traditions and the hymn singing is jubilant and joyful. The involvement of the parish priest and the emerging 'worship crew' in planning, leading and evaluating worship is a great strength. Worship is carefully planned around the core Christian values, the Holy Trinity is referred to and Bible stories and Bible readings are included within the format for worship. The children value the use of a candle as a focus for prayer and reflection and they have an excellent knowledge of Bible stories. The school prayer and hymn are displayed around the school and are familiar to the children. A newly formed group enables parents to come together to pray and gain Christian fellowship and parents of other faiths are equally at home in school providing important contributions to lessons.

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

The RE leader has been highly effective in raising the profile of the subject and making it accessible to staff and children alike, through staff training and close monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. Staff plan collaboratively with reference to Bible stories, passages from the Bible and links to Christian values. The curriculum is based on the recently revised Agreed Syllabus for Dudley and is well resourced and colour coded for ease of use by staff. The children enjoy RE lessons and their ability to make links between RE, the school's core Christian values and the Bible is outstanding. In a Year 5 lesson on the holy trinity, children gave examples of God in each of the three forms, as well as posing 'big questions' about why God needed to be represented as a trinity. In a Year 2 class, after listening to a section of the story of St Francis, the children were able to identify how some of the different 'school values' were demonstrated by characters in the narrative where pupils made connections between action, motive and Christian values other than those on the values display. One child summarised the moral of the story by explaining that 'there is always the chance to put something right, and if you can't put it right, someone will be there to help you'. Music is used to

support the spiritual dimension of RE and phrases from the Bible are used to illustrate key messages. Assessment is supported by an exemplary portfolio of children's work that has been moderated by staff and foundation governors, and as a result tasks have been planned that extend the children to achieve high levels that are above national expectations. Children's RE books from all year groups are beautifully presented and teachers mark against level descriptors for both Attainment Targets 1 and 2. The standard of work in RE is in line with standards in other subjects and progress is good with a variety of outcomes reflecting a balance between skills and knowledge. Planning is thorough, even when a Year 5 child delivered a lesson on Catholicism and records of lesson observation reflect an improving trend across the school.

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

The headteacher, through her clear vision, has established a 'Christian' school at the heart of its community, with all stakeholders attending sessions to reflect on which particular 'Christian' values they wanted to choose for 'their' school. Supported by an excellent subject leader for RE, a committed senior leadership team and loyal governors she has transformed the school ethos to ensure everyone feels safe and valued. Governors have worked with the headteacher to establish a clear understanding of the 'distinctive character' they wanted to evolve at Cradley. The responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the impact of this distinctiveness is shared equally with key governors carrying out lesson observations with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Governors are very clear about the strengths of the school because of the clarity of the headteacher's reports and because of their own firsthand experience of the school day to day. An exemplary subject leader has supported the staff to gain confidence in the teaching of RE where they have the freedom to develop their practice and take risks. The parish priest gives pastoral support to members of staff, who value the added dimension being a church school provides. Along with governors, the headteacher has sought to collaborate with other local church schools to formalise a partnership that will take the school forward. The views of all stakeholders on the school's distinctive Christian character are sought regularly through questionnaires. The school website, documentation, signs and displays explicitly promote the school's Christian status. Rigorous self-evaluation means school leaders accurately understand where further development is needed and the quality of the 'Toolkit' is both detailed and reflective. The staff provide excellent Christian role models for learners and the close family relationships they have created enrich the school, providing mutual support and excellent pastoral care. Through the example set by the head teacher and the INSET delivered by officers from the Diocese, staff and governors are clear about the distinctiveness of leadership in a church school.

SIAMS report 1<sup>st</sup> May 2013, Church Road, Cradley, Halesowen, West Midlands, B63 2UL