



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### **Rolph Church of England (VA) Primary School**

High Street, Thorpe le Soken,  
Clacton-on-Sea, Essex,  
CO16 0DY

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Chelmsford**

Local authority: N/A

Dates of inspection: 21 May 2015

Date of last inspection: 24 June 2010

School's unique reference number: 140506

Executive headteacher: John Crane, Head of School: Natasha Bennett.

Inspector's name and number: Gillian Holmes

Quality assurance: Lyn Field NS151

#### **School context**

Rolph is an average sized primary school serving pupils from Thorpe-le-Soken and the surrounding area. Virtually all pupils are of white British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, as is the proportion of those known to be eligible for free school meals. Rolph became an academy on 1 January 2014 and now works in partnership with three local schools, sharing an executive headteacher with one of them. All four of these schools are now members of the Sower Multi-Academy Trust sponsored by the Diocese of Chelmsford.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Rolph as a Church of England school are good.**

- Biblical teaching and the four Christian values of faith, love, forgiveness and respect underpin the life of the school.
- The executive headteacher and the head of school know the school well and have a strong vision of Christian leadership.
- Collective worship plays an important role in developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith.
- There is effective partnership with the local church and the diocese. They both support the school to develop its Christian distinctiveness.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Improve monitoring procedures for religious education (RE) and collective worship by leaders and governors, to inform planning, and raise outcomes for all pupils.
- Embed assessment for learning in RE in order to raise attainment, especially for the more able.
- Increase the involvement of pupils in planning, taking part and evaluating worship so that it engages all learners.

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

Biblical teaching and Christian values are well embedded in the life of the school. The school values of love, faith, forgiveness and respect, which are woven into the themes of collective worship, underpin the behaviour code, resulting in pupil behaviour being good. The values also contribute to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils. Parents praise the school's Christian distinctiveness and say that it gives their children 'a good foundation to live by'. In a recent survey 94% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they had a good understanding of the school's Christian ethos and the impact it had on their child. Pupils are proud that they attend a church school. They enjoy religious education and collective worship, but the contribution of RE to the Christian distinctiveness of the school is eclipsed by the effective Christian influence of collective worship. The school has strong links with the local church. Children and staff agree on the benefits of their school's strong link with a primary school in Kenya, in developing understanding of diversity and cultural respect. A pupil explained, 'we are all different, but we have the same rights and the same God'. Academic standards in the core subjects are above average with pupils of all abilities making satisfactory or better progress across the school. The school focuses on six core learning skills, which are tied in with the school's Christian values, support all aspects of learning. Attendance is consistently good at 96.7%. School leaders have an agreed definition of spirituality but it is not widely understood by all staff and governors. Consequently good practice is not highlighted and opportunities are missed for developing this.

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

Pupils have a positive attitude to collective worship which plays an important role in the life of the school. This is confirmed by parents. Prayerful and meaningful worship takes place with a focus on Christian values and biblical teaching which contributes significantly to the life of the school, to pupils' spiritual and moral development and the enhancement of the school's Christian distinctiveness. Pupils are very positive about their Bible knowledge, explaining that 'God helps us all'. Pupils say that prayer is important for 'thanking and asking for things for other people'. They use the Lord's Prayer daily and also pray at lunchtime and at the end of the day. Pupils use the 'diocesan holding crosses' if they are leading prayers. There are plans for a prayer garden to be constructed in the near future by the pupils themselves. The school council is leading this project supported by the head of school. Collective worship is effectively planned by the executive headteacher but at present other staff members do not have the opportunity to be actively involved. An important feature of the worshipping life of the school is the weekly worship led by the parish priest and the termly Eucharist. The local church is used for festival services and for the end of term service, when parents are encouraged to join with the school. The vicar has ensured that pupils are aware of Anglican practices and the seasons of the church's year. The biblical knowledge that pupils gain from collective worship provides quality enrichment to RE in the school. Pupils are eloquent about the Trinity and the life of Jesus. Collective worship in the school provides pupils with a language and sensitivity which is evident in their behaviour and relationships. Pupils enjoy the occasions when they lead prayers, act out bible stories and take an active part in collective worship. Pupils do not however, have sufficient opportunities to be fully involved in both the planning and the delivery of worship. This has been identified by the school leadership but has still to be actioned. The systems in place for gathering feedback are not effective enough to provide leaders with clear evidence of the impact worship has on the life of the school community.

**The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory.**

There have been a number of changes of RE subject leader since the last inspection. At present the executive headteacher is the subject leader, but the leadership will soon be handed over to one of the class teachers who is at present being trained for the role. A recent joint RE audit by

the headteachers and their diocesan adviser, revealed the need for staff training to support teachers' subject knowledge, planning and monitoring. This is in the process of being actioned with the support of the diocese. The school has recently held a very successful RE week focussing on Pentecost with all classes taking part in a 'Pentecost walk'. In previous years all classes in the school have undertaken 'Easter walks' as part of a week-long focus on the events of the Easter story. These special RE weeks have played an important role in the development of spirituality in the school. Learners value and enjoy RE. The older pupils find learning about other faiths interesting as they are encouraged to compare what they learn with their knowledge of Christianity. RE is linked to the school values, supporting pupils' SMSC development and follows the diocesan syllabus. Lessons provide opportunities for learners to discuss and share their ideas and opinions and everyone's views are valued, which supports greater understanding of diversity and difference. Teaching in RE is satisfactory and sometimes better, however, there is limited use of assessment. It shows that pupils attain standards expected for their age but there is no indication of the progress they are making or whether it is fast enough. The information does not support teachers to provide appropriate challenge in their lesson planning and as a consequence there are too few pupils working at the higher levels. Although lessons all have learning objectives that pupils understand, they are often unsure how to improve their work. Staff training has begun to address these issues but it is too early to see the impact upon pupils' progress.

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

The school is well led by the executive headteacher and the school head who actively promote the Christian values. The values are tied in with the school's six core learning skills which support all aspects of learning. The school has experienced a significant number of staff changes since the last inspection, but the commitment of the two headteachers, working closely together, has provided consistently good leadership. They have ensured that all recently recruited staff are supportive of the school's Christian ethos. Governors supported the change of the school to becoming an academy, under the sponsorship of the diocese, acknowledging the benefits of sharing resources and good practice with the partner schools in the academy. The strong self-evaluation and the detailed school development plan provide an accurate assessment of the school and a clear action plan. Governors receive copies of these plans, but play a limited role in monitoring the outcomes. More effective monitoring of RE and worship has been identified by the headteachers and is being addressed. RE meets statutory requirements, and the teacher who will take over the subject leadership from September is receiving appropriate training for the role. The leaders ensure that collective worship is well planned, relevant to the pupils and supports their SMSC development. The parish priest is a regular visitor to school, leading collective worship and supporting pastorally. There is good practice in spiritual development but there is no agreed approach. The school takes an active part in the village community in providing harvest parcels and supporting local charities. The school has a close link with a primary school in Kenya which contributes to the cultural development of staff and pupils. The school has a good working relationship with the local church and the diocese. Parents are very supportive of the school as a church school and feel that they are kept well informed by the school leaders. The headteachers know their school well and have action plans in place to continue to develop the school's Christian distinctiveness.

SIAMS report May 2015, Rolph C of E (VA) Primary School, Thorpe-le-Soken, CO16 0DY