



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Altwood Church of England School

Altwood Road Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 4PU

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Windsor and Maidenhead

Dates of inspection: 11th June 2014

Date of last inspection: 29th April 2009

School's unique reference number: 138342

Headteacher: Mr Neil Dimbleby

Inspector's name and number: Nicholas McKemey 280

School context

Altwood Church of England School converted to academy status in July 2012 and appointed a new Headteacher in September 2013. The school has 820 students including 141 in the Sixth Form. Currently 60% of the students live within the local borough but this proportion is growing. The remainder live mainly in the Slough area. Nearly three quarters of the students are white British. A significant minority are of Asian origin. The number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds is below the national average but increasing. Most students have predominantly Christian backgrounds with 13% of other world faiths.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Altwood Church of England School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school has a powerful ethos of Christian fellowship which creates a purposeful and harmonious school community
- The students identify and adopt distinctively Christian values which influence every area of school life
- Collective worship is a focal element in the life of the school creating awareness of and strong allegiance to its Christian purpose
- Religious education makes a strategic contribution to students' knowledge and understanding of the life of Christ and the Christian faith
- The deeply committed leadership and management has a clear, Gospel based, vision for the flourishing of the whole person which is realised in every aspect of the students' progress
- The close and collaborative partnership with the local church makes a salient contribution to the Christian character of the school

Area to improve

- Make the monitoring and evaluation of the Christian distinctiveness of the school a built-in feature of the governing body's business cycle to ensure the highest level of challenge and support

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

The powerful and inclusive ethos of Christian fellowship at Altwood Church of England School enables every student to flourish as a whole person. As a result the students have high aspirations and make outstanding progress in their personal development. Behaviour and attendance are excellent because students and staff have strong mutual trust. They go “the extra mile” together to overcome challenges. Students exhibit mature and purposeful approaches to learning that underpin rapidly rising achievement.

At the heart of the school’s character is a productive engagement with Christian values. In a developing and inclusive process “Truth and Forgiveness” have been selected from a well-established suite of Christian values. All students consistently understand these values as Bible based and recognise them as personally challenging. They openly discuss them both at school and at home as a focal context for moral and social behaviour.

Outstanding religious education is provided by a team of highly skilled and qualified teachers. They make a salient contribution to students’ knowledge and understanding of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the Trinity and the core elements of Christian faith. Excellent learning from other world faiths further ensures the highly effective development of theological thinking, religious tolerance and enthusiasm for theological and philosophical enquiry. This is evident in the students’ subject choices in the sixth form.

Every aspect of the school contributes to outstanding spiritual development. In art, for example, students explore and express spiritual and moral ideas through their artwork. In drama in the “Open the Book” outreach project students skilfully act out Biblical narratives for younger children. The extended chapel and prayer garden signal the Christian purpose and pastoral mission of the school. These contribute to the students’ capacity for private prayer and reflection. The Parish Priest and staff throughout the school provide a range of highly valued and pastoral counseling and spiritual guidance to all members of the community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is a central chord in the life of Altwood Church of England School. It enhances spiritual development and engenders an ethos of harmony and respect throughout the school. Attitudes towards worship are extremely positive and behaviour in worship is exemplary. This is due to excellent planning, highly effective shared leadership, a rich variety of inclusive student participation and leadership. A clear distinction is made between acts of worship and assemblies. Collective worship is formed by the Church calendar and significant events in school life. A Eucharist service is held each term. Together this provision successfully nurtures and deepens theological understanding and prayer life across the school. As a result of worship students talk knowledgeably and confidently about the significance of the life and teaching Jesus Christ and the meaning of the Trinity. They understand the significance of Christian festivals and sacraments within the Anglican tradition. They also explain how Christian themes in worship relate to ethical behaviour and Christian values. For example, younger students thoughtfully describe the relationship between St Peter and Jesus in the context of forgiveness. Students enthusiastically describe how the Christian themes in worship link to the school’s many charitable initiatives. Just one example is the sponsorship of a Peruvian boy’s education.

Prayer is a deeply valued and persistent thread running throughout school life. It features not only in acts of worship but also at governor’s meetings and the Year 11 Ball. As a result students are familiar with and greatly value prayer both as a corporate act and a place for private reflection. “Prayer is when I talk to God”, one student explained.

The Parish Priest plays a significant role in the direction and content of worship and fosters a

strong and productive relationship between the school, the local church and wider Christian communities. Students' and families' enjoyment and understanding of worship is, therefore, significantly enhanced because they experience Christian worship and Anglican liturgy both in school and in church.

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

Deeply committed leadership and management have a clear "Gospel Values' based vision for the flourishing of the student as a whole person which is successfully realised throughout Altwood Church of England School. The establishment of the school with a distinctive mission, the development of the chapel and an holistic approach to improving student outcomes have renewed and deepened the effectiveness of the distinctively Christian ethos. Students' academic improvement, personal and spiritual development and the generation of a harmonious and purposeful learning community are driven by explicit Christian values. The new uniforms, badges and signage underline the Christian character of the school. School policies and educational strategies are based on the Mission Statement and inclusive of those of all faiths and none. As a result, throughout the school there is awareness of and strong allegiance to its Christian purpose.

The governors have successfully created the conditions for highly effective teaching, learning and fast improving achievement. Through their determined efforts they have been successful in challenging and supporting the school to realise the mission statement. As a result committed senior leaders enhance the effectiveness of the Christian character of the school. The strategic monitoring and evaluation of the impact of Christian distinctiveness by the school's leadership is effective but not fully embedded in the governing body's business cycle. The planning, monitoring and evaluation of worship and religious education are outstandingly effective. This secures the central importance and outstanding quality of these aspects of school life. Religious education and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

The leadership is highly successful in creating effective and sustained partnerships with local churches, the diocese and other faith communities. Because of this students understand how Christian values apply inclusively in a diverse society. The school is highly supportive of colleagues who have potential as future leaders in church schools. This gives the school a markedly outward looking aspect to its Christian character and role.

SIAMS report June 2014 Altwood Church of England School Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 4PU