Church of England Schools were winners in two out of four categories in the Pupil Premium Awards last night (May 12).
The Rt Revd Stephen Conway, Bishop of Ely and lead Bishop on education said: "The Church of England is committed to serving the transformation of the life opportunities of children so that region and postcode do not determine in advance what young people may achieve in their education. The evidence of profound progress in the leading schools provides real hope for the children, encouragement for teachers and a determination to work even more closely with community partners. Thank goodness for the positive impact of the Pupil Premium."

Award winning Church schools were: Northern Saints Church of England Primary School, Sunderland, Greenfylde C of E First School, with Ripley St Thomas CofE Academy, Lancaster, as runner up.

The winning schools were announced in London by Education and Childcare Minister Sam Gyimah. The winners were presented with awards by Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills at the OECD, who chaired the judging panel. All finalists have consistently shown high levels of attainment or significant rates of improvement among their disadvantaged pupils and demonstrated innovative and effective use of the Pupil Premium.

One of the successful schools, Greenfylde C of E First School, Ilminster, winner of the infant, first and key stage 3 schools category, ensures disadvantaged pupils have the broadest range of opportunities, including educational visits and experience of the arts. Alongside this, access to after school clubs and breakfast clubs has improved attendance and confidence.

Northern Saints Church of England Primary School, Sunderland, joint winner of the key stage 2 category, demonstrated innovation by forming local partnerships. Describing how some of the Pupil Premium is used, Head teacher, Steve Williamson said: 'Some of our children come from homes where parents find it difficult to teach their children some of the basics they need for educational success. Over time we've developed a very strong partnership with Seven Stories, which is the National Centre for Children's Books based in Newcastle. They showed us research that demonstrated successful adults have developed a love and enjoyment of reading which, if nurtured at an early age, could easily be replicated throughout a school setting. So we set up the Reader in Residence scheme using Pupil Premium funding which pays for a 'Reader' for 2 days each week. The work is transforming our children's early reading experience.'

The Rt Revd Paul Butler, Bishop of Durham said: "I am delighted that Northern Saints has been recognised for this award. Like other Church schools in my Diocese they are a beacon of equality within their communities, proving fantastic opportunities for all their young people. The award is well deserved."

The pupil premium - worth £2.5 billion this year - has enabled schools to support some of the most vulnerable children in their care.

Nigel Genders, Chief Education Officer for the Church of England said: 'I am thrilled that the creativity, energy and dedication that our school leaders, teachers and governors give to all their pupils has been recognised. By working with local partners, thinking outside the box and making the most of limited resources these schools are transforming young lives.'

ENDS

Notes to editors
The pupil premium is worth up to £1,900 per child and can be used however schools see fit to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and close the gap between them and their peers. For more details of the Pupil Premium Awards visit the dedicated website here - http://www.pupilpremiumawards.co.uk/

Read a blog by the headteacher of Northern Saints C of E Primary School here - http://cofecomms.tumblr.com/post/143576690152/schools-blog-how-pupils-flourish-at-a