

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

### **St George's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Church Track  
Bourton  
Gillingham, Dorset  
SP8 5BN

<b>Diocese:</b>	<b>Salisbury</b>
Local authority:	Dorset
Dates of inspection:	5 July 2013
Date of last inspection:	24 June 2008
School's unique reference number:	113756
Headteacher:	Michael Salisbury
Inspector's name and number:	Andrew Rickett 201

#### **School context**

St George's is a smaller than average rural primary school with 118 children on roll. They are arranged into four mixed age class groups. The large majority of the children are from a white British heritage. The number of children with learning needs is above the national average. The proportion eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. Attendance is well above the national average.

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

St George's has made good progress since the previous inspection by adding depth to its understanding of what it means to be a church school. This has given greater clarity to the school's articulation of a distinctive Christian ethos interpreted within the context of the community it serves. This distinctive ethos makes a significant impact on the children's well-being as well as contributing to the success of the school's empowerment of children to build the skills necessary to learn.

#### **Established strengths**

- The quality of opportunities for children to reflect on issues of faith and belief.
- The extent to which Christian values impact on all areas of school life.
- The integrity with which the leadership and management, including governors, promote a Christian ethos that has purpose and meaning to children and the whole school community.

#### **Focus for development**

- Develop monitoring and evaluation of the impact of reflection diaries to identify how well they contribute to children's spiritual growth as they progress through the school.
- Ensure that existing school procedures to monitor and evaluate include the impact of the school's Christian values across the whole curriculum.
- Develop the approach to self-evaluation so that it more closely reflects the school's own distinctiveness and is used to a greater extent as a tool for development.

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

The school has considered carefully how best to interpret Christian values so that they have maximum impact on the children's learning and personal development. The outcome of this is a cohesive approach to how values pervade all areas of school life through their relationship

with Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) and Building Learning Power. Importantly, children and adults in school have a very clear understanding that these values have their roots in Christian teaching because 'they belong to a church school'. This was made evident during the inspection when children would spontaneously refer to Bible stories to explain why values such as forgiveness, trust and care were an integral part of the life of the school. The link between these explicit Christian values and children's learning is particularly strong through the ability of children to reflect on their achievement and progress and the contribution this makes to the quality of teaching and learning. It is the strength of these links that makes the impact of Christian values outstanding. For example, teachers naturally refer to values such as respect and thankfulness as part of lessons and encourage children to deepen their understanding of what they are learning through empathy and compassion. This makes an important contribution to the high quality of achievement in the children's learning. The school has good systems in place to monitor the place of values but these do not currently evaluate their impact across the whole curriculum. The opportunities for children to reflect are outstanding. The school's leaders and key governors have an excellent understanding of what spirituality is and have ensured that this aspect of the school has moved forward significantly since the previous inspection. Each class base has a reflection area which children talk about with enthusiasm saying that they 'give us the opportunity to be still and think about important things'. The care that teachers demonstrate towards children makes an impact on the quality of relationships throughout the school community and contributes to the excellent behaviour of the children and the positive attitudes they have towards the school and their learning.

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

Whether speaking to children, their parents, governors or staff, all members of the school community regard collective worship as one of the most important ways through which the school expresses its distinctive Christian character. Collective worship is outstanding because it not only strongly promotes the Christian ethos but because it supports children's learning through an emphasis on reflection and makes a significant contribution to the children's moral and social development. The introduction of reflection diaries has been instrumental in giving children greater opportunities to think more deeply about the meaning of the messages they hear in collective worship and the difference they can make to their own lives. Children are very positive about these diaries and value the fact that they remain personal to them even though they are comfortable to share what they have written. The school has not yet put in place a procedure to evaluate the full impact of these diaries or how their use by children grows as they move through the school. Acts of worship have a strong emphasis on Christian teaching and include elements that clearly reflect a distinct Anglican tradition of prayer, reflection and Biblical teaching. Children have regular opportunities to contribute to acts of worship through the leading of prayers and participation in drama. This was seen on the day of the inspection when Year 6 children made a central contribution to worship as they shared their thoughts on the excitement and sadness of the change to senior school. Feedback by children about their reflection diaries and monitoring by the governors' Spiritual and Pastoral Committee gives clear evaluation of the impact of collective worship. Leadership of collective worship is excellent with effective systems to ensure that worship is continually developing. Children have plenty of opportunities to pray throughout the school day outside of acts of worship. These include adding their own prayers to the prayer tree, writing prayers for the class reflection area and class prayers during the course of the school day. Children have a mature understanding of the purpose of prayer. Older children, for example, say that it doesn't matter if a person is a Christian or not because 'God listens to everyone because we are all special to Him'. Worship planning ensures that children have a very good understanding of the church year and its major festivals. Children have a growing awareness of the Trinity and are confident to express their thoughts on what this means to them.

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

Standards in religious education (RE) for the vast majority of children are at least in line with national expectations by the time children leave the school at the end of Key Stage 2. A good proportion of children attain higher than expected levels in RE. Children's achievement in RE is comparable to other core subjects and this represents excellent progress. Assessment is

thorough and accurate. The school has improved the way it assesses children's progress in RE. There is now greater emphasis on recording specific skills and knowledge that children acquire as well as assessing their understanding of what they are learning. This means that children's progress is now more effectively tracked as they move through the school. The school is aware that the next step is to ensure that assessment is moderated particularly with regard to what children learn from their studies of RE. Planning for RE is thorough and ensures that there is an appropriate balance between the study of Christianity and other world faiths. A two year programme of study has been carefully devised to give children an exciting curriculum that is taught where appropriate as either part of their topic or at other times as a separate subject. The focus on key questions in both medium and short term lesson plans means that children have a say in the direction of their learning with the teacher helping to facilitate the children's enquiry. This works very well. For example, in a lesson with a mixed year 1/2 class, based on why we have special buildings for worship, children were fascinated by the different domes they had seen and wanted to explore their significance to different religions. It is this approach to RE that makes the subject exciting for the children and one of the reasons why they say that it is a subject that they enjoy. Teaching of RE is of a very high quality and is at least consistently good with many examples of outstanding teaching. Teachers have a very secure knowledge of the subject and use questioning skilfully to challenge the children's thinking. An outstanding aspect of RE is the extent to which it supports the school's Christian ethos particularly in explicitly promoting Christian values. In the RE and circle time lessons observed during the inspection links were made with acts of worship, the class reflection areas and specific values such as trust and thankfulness as part of prayer. The subject leader is relatively new to the post but is very enthusiastic and committed to RE. She has a clear grasp of what needs to be done to continue to take the subject forward and the quality of her action plans is excellent.

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

The leadership and management of the school, including its governing body, display considerable integrity in their commitment to ensuring that the school's ethos is distinctively Christian in a way that has purpose and meaning for the whole school community. The headteacher models this ethos through the way that he leads the school. This is something that is appreciated by parents and recognised by governors as a key element in the success of the school. The headteacher is supported by staff in their commitment to the school's church character and they have a very clear understanding of how Christian values and spirituality lie at the heart of the school's mission to ensure that all children reach their potential in their personal development and in their learning. This informs the school improvement plan which regularly identifies priorities for development that link overall school improvement with the development of the Christian ethos. The role of the Spiritual and Pastoral Committee is an essential part of this process of identifying priorities and evaluating their impact. This committee is very well informed and therefore challenges the school to ensure that any action taken makes a difference to the lives of the children. The quality of its self-evaluation as a church school is accurate but could move forward by developing more closely the link between the evidence it gathers when monitoring and the use of self-evaluation as a tool for future development particularly with regard to identifying impact of values across all areas of the curriculum. All staff are involved in the development of initiatives such as the introduction of reflection diaries and in developing their understanding of concepts such as spirituality. Links with the parish church and other local churches are an important aspect of the life of the school and the way it reaches out to the wider community. For example, a visit by the whole school to a neighbouring village, from where some children come, included a visit to their church and this was greatly appreciated by the parents and members of that village community. The vicar and foundation governors are committed to the links between church and school and take advantage of opportunities to promote them. Parents say that the school's Christian values enable their children to have a strong sense of right from wrong. They feel that the school encourages their children to think about moral issues and to respond through charitable giving as a way of demonstrating in a practical way their care and empathy for others in need.

SIAMS report July 2013 St George's CE VA Primary School Bourton SP8 5BN