



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Whitchurch Church of England VC Primary School

Daniel Road
Whitchurch
Hampshire
RG2B 7LS

Previous SIAS Grade: Outstanding

Current SIAMS Grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Winchester

Local authority: Hampshire
Dates of inspection: 17th March 2016
Date of last inspection: 25th March 2011
School's unique reference number: 116324
Headteacher: Kate Steven
Inspector's name and number: Lorraine Pugh 819

School context

Whitchurch is a larger than average voluntary controlled Church of England primary school with 414 pupils. Pupils come from Whitchurch and its surrounding villages. The vast majority of pupils are of white British heritage. 11% of pupils are on the special needs register and 9% receive the pupil premium grant. Further expansion of the school is planned for 2019. The school operates 15 classes. The school has a new Headteacher who joined the school in January 2016. 5 members of the senior leadership team have joined the school in the last academic year.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Whitchurch primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- Clear links are made between the school's Christian values, collective worship and religious education, with each having Jesus and the teachings of the Bible as their focus.
- Behaviour of pupils is of the highest standard and learners actively support respectful and inclusive relationships with one another.
- Care and compassion is evident within the school and in its links with the wider community.

Areas to improve

- Increased involvement of the pupils so that their views, thoughts and perceptions can play an even greater role in guiding the future development of the school.
- Develop an agreed definition of spirituality, which can be used throughout the school to increase the spiritual development of all stakeholders.
- To strengthen the established formal monitoring systems for Christian distinctiveness to increase their effectiveness in shaping the school's future development of the school.

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

In spite of its larger size, Whitchurch primary school feels intimate, inclusive and friendly. The Christian character contributes significantly to the academic achievement, personal development and well being of all learners. The school's Christian values are clearly understood and frequently referred to by adults and pupils. Pupils confidently explain how these values support their personal relationships and behaviour. They consistently make significant academic progress from their starting points, from the beginning of their time at Whitchurch, to the end of Year 6, where they are performing above national expectations. Pastoral care and high academic achievement is central in the school's approach to the Christian ethos, thus supporting the school's belief that all children are unique in the sight of God. Strong leadership ensures that learners are well prepared for their secondary education and future adult life. The atmosphere around the school has a relaxed, family feel and pupils say that they feel safe and cared for. High quality learning in religious education (RE) was seen on the day of the inspection. Teachers give careful thought to the ideas to be explored when planning RE. Pupils respond with great enthusiasm when challenged in their thinking and are focussed and engaged in their learning. For example, older pupils have written sensitively about sacrifice during their learning about Easter. The quality of the RE curriculum, in particular the teaching of Christianity, is a major contributor to the high standards achieved. Opportunities are given for pupils to encounter other faiths and beliefs. The impact of this is seen in the positive way in which the pupils discuss world faiths other than Christianity. Reflective spaces around the school and excellent interactive displays support pupils' spiritual development. Class worship spaces are well used and respected as special places within the classrooms. The church is also used regularly as a resource for the curriculum, as well as a place for peace and reflection. Religious festivals are celebrated through the Christian year and key services are held in the church. Charity work is a strong feature of the school and pupils are able to explain how this work impacts on their lives and that of others. The school, enabling pupils to develop social responsibility, supports child-initiated fundraising. Parents say that their children are keen to share and talk about their learning, which often leads to deep and meaningful conversations at home. The school meets the statutory requirements for religious education.

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

Worship makes an outstanding contribution to the life of the school and its high priority ensures it significantly impacts on Christian development of the whole school community. Acts of worship have a strong Christian focus and are skilfully planned and led by the headteacher, staff, clergy and visitors. Anglican traditions are used effectively and pupils are involved in simple rituals and responses. Bible stories are enjoyed and pupils are enthusiastic when describing their favourite stories and the lessons within them. There are clear biblical references to the teachings of Jesus, particularly about loving your neighbour and being loved by God. Pupils are keen participants in worship, responding enthusiastically, particularly when singing hymns, which are a joy to witness. Parents say they value the opportunities offered by the school to be part of worship. There are systems in place for monitoring and evaluating the impact of worship and this informs future planning. Older children are increasingly involved in leading 'House' worship and say that they would like increased leadership roles. Pupils have a good understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils like services within the church, saying it is a peaceful place which helps them to think of Jesus as the, 'Light of the World'. Pupils explain prayer as, 'Time for giving thanks and for asking for help'. The local vicar is a regular worship leader and the pupils particularly enjoy his visits due to their engaging content and pupil participation. Other visitors introduce pupils to various worship styles, thus enriching their worship experiences. Pupils write their own prayers and these are put into the school prayer book or placed on their classroom worship tables. Younger pupils know that prayer is a special time and as one five year-old noted, 'You have to sit nicely and pray when you are in church, to respect God'. Foundation governors have organised a successful multi sensory prayer day focussing on the meaning of the Lord's Prayer and they have also recently

set up a prayer group for adults. School leaders are becoming clearer in their understanding of spirituality and its importance when planning worship and curriculum experiences, however, they recognise that this is an area for further development. The arrangements for collective worship meet statutory requirements.

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

School leaders base their vision for Whitchurch Primary school upon clear Christian values. The school's Christian character was strongly maintained during the recent significant changeover in senior leadership. It is now being strengthened by the new headteacher who, despite being very new to the school, is already embarking on its further development. New staff are very aware of the school's Christian status and their commitment to upholding its values formed part of their recruitment process. All stakeholders across the school have been fully involved in identifying the school's core Christian values. Links with the local Diocese allow staff and governors to benefit from personal, professional and spiritual development. This ensures that the pupils and staff receive rich experiences that support and enhance their understanding of Christian belief. Monitoring and evaluation systems are effective in their contribution to academic attainment and progress. The Hampshire Agreed Syllabus is used to support good quality RE learning and statutory requirements for RE are being met. The RE leader's monitoring shows that RE expectations and performance match other core subjects. The school's leadership ensures RE and Collective worship impact on the pupils' Christian development, securely linking to the school's core Christian values. Governors are making increasingly valuable contributions to the school's future Christian development and development areas from the previous SIAS inspection have been successfully addressed. However, the informal monitoring and evaluation of the school's Christian work needs to have a more formal structure in order to identify future actions more accurately. Parents say that they feel involved with the school and are well informed. They enjoy attending the church services and school worships they are invited to. They say they are pleased that the school teaches their children about other faiths in a balanced, child appropriate way. Pupils are keen to explain differences and similarities between different faiths and cultures. They are also very keen to help others through their charitable work and this has led to pupils approaching the headteacher with their own individual ideas for fundraising. The long established vicar is a regular visitor and he is fully involved in the school's Christian work. Foundation governors have close links with the school and are committed to their role, including the organisation of special events with a Christian focus.