



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Shoscombe Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

St. Julian's Road
Shoscombe
Bath
BA2 8NB

Previous SIAMS grade: 2 - Good

Diocese: Bath and Wells

Local authority: Bath and North East Somerset

Dates of inspection: 20th November 2014

Date of last inspection: 6th November 2009

School's unique reference number: 109236

Headteacher: Jane Gascoigne

Inspector's name and number: Revd John Angle (119)

School context

Shoscombe school is a well below average sized primary school with children taught in three mixed age classes and a reception class. It serves the small village of Shoscombe and surrounding hamlets. It is set in a stunning rural location. The school buildings have been extended and improved to provide excellent outdoor facilities and learning areas. In September 2012 Shoscombe joined the Church Valley Federation with St Julian's Church School at Wellow and Camerton Church School. This has given the opportunity for sharing expertise and resources as well as a Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher. There is a single governing body.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Shoscombe Primary School as a Church of England school is outstanding

- There is a permeating and inspirational Christian ethos. The school fully embraces its Christian foundation and promotes Christian values in all areas of school life
- Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and is effectively supported by high quality Religious Education (RE) and collective worship
- There are outstanding relationships between the school, the church and the local Christian community
- Every child is enabled to flourish and make excellent progress in their learning because of the school's outstanding nurturing and caring family ethos
- Children develop as confident, caring, creative, positive and friendly individuals. Because of the school's attention to their personal development, behaviour is outstanding

Areas to improve

- Although an initial action plan has already been made this year for Religious Education, more rigorous attention needs to be given to monitoring, evaluation and assessment

procedures to raise standards further

- Establish the strong and central place of Christianity in the school's RE curriculum

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

Concern for the welfare, happiness and progress of children, clearly based on Christian values, permeates the life of the school. There is a welcoming, accepting and friendly ethos which reflects the school's inclusive Christian foundation. This impacts on both children's personal development and their academic progress. The staff's sensitive and caring pastoral relationships encourage children's confidence and self esteem and have a positive effect on their attitudes to learning. All children are valued and treated as unique individuals made in the image of God. As a result they enjoy school. "Everyone makes you feel welcome" said one child, and another commented "Teachers make learning fun!"

Teaching engages children's interests and attention. As a result they make good progress, achieve well and attain above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of year six. They develop excellent speaking and listening skills as they move up the school. Teachers and teaching assistants give excellent support to disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those helped by the pupil premium, in a Christian spirit of care, love and inclusiveness. These Christian values have also resulted in attendance figures throughout the school which are above the national average.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children is outstanding because they are encouraged to identify and enjoy 'wow' moments in school life and learning. For example Forest School activities are centred around the holistic development of the whole child and also strongly encourage their spirituality. Staff encourage children to reflect on their work, to use their imagination, to question and to be creative. There are further opportunities for stillness and reflection in the school's Quiet Garden and in special reflection areas in each class room - "places to stop and think", one child explained. Prayer is an important aspect of school life. There are opportunities for prayer in classroom spaces and in collective worship, at lunch time and the end of the school day. Children's outstanding behaviour is encouraged and celebrated. Where specific Christian values are practised and identified by pupils or staff they are celebrated with "Squeaky Clean" certificates. Children understand what is right and wrong and arguments are speedily and agreeably resolved. However, children are polite, respectful, tolerant, considerate, thoughtful and caring of each other. "We are a big family" said one young child. The School Parliament gives pupils a voice which the members take very seriously and responsibly. They identify very strongly with the Christian ethos of the school, negotiating school rules, encouraging younger children and their peers, helping the development of charitable activities in the school and promoting the Christian values of the school to visitors.

Children's attitudes to difference are sensitive. They welcome all, irrespective of ethnicity, socio-economic background or disability. This is because Religious Education and other areas of the curriculum encourage pupils to understand the multi-cultural nature of our world. Examples are the Comenius project (with links to France, Ireland, Spain and Denmark), visits locally and abroad and visitors to the school. The strong relationship between the school and the parish makes an outstanding contribution to children's understanding of the variety of Christian traditions and expressions of spirituality within Anglicanism. The central school building has a chancel attached to it, and is used as a school hall, dining room and meeting place for the local church community. The visual impact and use of this space on a daily basis reinforces the Christian nature of the school. The school operates as a living expression of a distinctively Christian community with the very clear value of "love thy neighbour as thyself" at its heart.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The daily act of collective worship is highly valued by all members of the school community, not only developing a strong sense of community but also giving every day a clear Christian

focus. Collective worship is inspirational and makes an outstanding impact on pupils' understanding and appreciation of the school's Christian values, vision and ethos, together with the traditions and practices of the Christian church. Biblical material and Christian teaching influence the thinking, attitudes and actions of the children. "I think about God and other people and it helps me learn about God" said one. Another child commented, "In assembly I have God thoughts". Collective worship encourages children to be honest and reflective. For example, when one boy was asked whether worship made him feel special, he replied "No, it makes me feel bad!". He went on to say he could ask God for forgiveness! Children enjoy collective worship, they learn new things and acknowledge it encourages them to live a good life. One girl expressed prayer as an activity that "cleanses my mind"! Worship is effective in encouraging children to engage in charitable activities or to develop more distinctively Christian attitudes or relationships in school life and in the community. One example is a visit to a local care home where the children's behaviour, attitudes and respect were acknowledged. The regular involvement of the local Christian community in leading worship provides highly valued and inspirational support. Through the school's worship, children are able to talk about Christian festivals, can recite the Lord's Prayer and know and enjoy singing hymns. The lighting of a candle helps them understand the centrality of Jesus in Christianity as the 'Light of the World'. Similarly, a Trinitarian Christian blessing offers an expression of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Examples of the importance of prayer in the life of the school are the school prayer, books of prayers and prayers read by children in acts of worship. Collective Worship is well planned by staff with the support of the Rector, including a focus on Christian values. Children are strongly encouraged to reflect on the topics and the values that are highlighted and to put them into action. They are given regular opportunities to be involved in acts of collective worship in a variety of ways and at special times in the church's year in school and in church. The school ensures that the atmosphere in collective worship is calm and respectful and encourages a sense of reflection and prayer. All are involved and engaged because worship is well planned and led to meet the needs of all participants, using music and religious symbols as well as multi-media presentations. There is regular peer review and evaluation looking at context, content and impact on the children. Children also are regularly asked about their experience of collective worship through a questionnaire. This helps to improve acts of worship and to ensure ongoing relevance and impact.

The effectiveness of Religious Education is good.

Religious Education has a high profile in the school. It makes an outstanding contribution to the distinctively Christian values of the school and to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. RE has equal status with other core subjects in staffing, responsibility and resourcing. It is given sufficient dedicated curriculum time. The standard of attainment for the large majority of pupils is in line with national expectations and pupil's achievement in RE is equal to or better than comparable subjects in the school. The locally Agreed Syllabus is adapted and used for mixed age teaching and gives pupils an understanding of Christianity and the other major faiths represented in this country. Although it is important that pupils should continue to make links between the beliefs, practices and value systems of a range of faiths, it is important that the curriculum is examined to ensure that Christianity forms the majority study of at least two thirds of the given teaching time. Teaching observed was outstanding and some excellent examples of creative, engaging and inspirational teaching was seen. Skilled teaching assistants work effectively to support pupils' learning as part of a stable and experienced team in RE. Use is made of role play, audio-visual material, story, artefacts, music and even cooking! Pupils are well motivated and enjoy RE because they are presented with thought provoking ideas which stimulate their curiosity and engage their imagination and creativity. They are good listeners and willing to reflect and think about ideas presented to them. For example, following lessons about Remembrance Day 'big questions' were asked such as "Is there life after death?" and "Why did so many people suffer in the war?". Children are encouraged to apply bible teaching to their own lives and to ethical issues. An example is the story of Zaccheus being used to consider alleged tax avoidance by such conglomerates as

Starbucks and Google! The RE coordinator has recently taken on a leadership role across the Federation, to support colleagues in their teaching of RE and thereby improve provision for pupils and provide consistency. She has passion and enthusiasm for RE and effectively leads an experienced team across the three schools. Resources have also been developed to support teaching and learning. There is a Federation Action Plan for this academic year which outlines clear objectives and plans for the growth and development of the subject, but more detailed plans need to be put in place for evaluation and assessment of RE. Success criteria in the Action Plan are SMART and will enhance the quality of RE across the school as they are achieved. Relevant training opportunities are being put in place for staff to further develop their expertise in this subject. Strong links with the local Christian community draws on the richness of Christian experience in the Anglican church and gives strong and relevant support for many aspects of the RE curriculum.

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

There is effective, encouraging and enthusiastic leadership of the school as a church school by the head teacher. This commitment is shared by the whole staff team and the governors. All work together to express a strong Christian vision for the school. The school Ethos Statement makes it very clear that the school is developing its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England in partnership with the church at parish and diocesan level. The school motto 'Inspire to believe and achieve' encapsulates the objectives of the school and along with the school's Christian values, is consistently communicated to all stakeholders, through the regular school newsletter and the excellent school web site. Leaders also ensure that aspects of Christian life and practice and Christian values are made visible in the school grounds and building. The care, guidance and support for children and their families is deeply rooted in the loving Christian ethos of the school and there are also effective pastoral and spiritual links between the school and the church. The positive and inclusive attitude of staff and their concerns to model Christian values impacts on the attainment and progress of pupils. School leaders and governors live out these values in their effective processes of intervention for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Leaders strongly encourage all staff to promote the well being of pupils and particularly their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Evaluation and strategic planning involving school leaders, clergy and governors ensures the school's Christian ethos and values continue to be effective and lead to further school improvement. Most school policies draw on the school's Christian ethos for inspiration. New parents, governors and staff are made aware of the school's Christian distinctiveness when taking on their new roles. Parents are very supportive of the school's Christian values which they see as providing a strong foundation for life and a safe and secure environment in which children can realise their full potential. As one parent put it, "My child has blossomed here". All staff are encouraged to use opportunities for personal professional development provided by the Diocese in relation to the Christian nature of the school. There are now more opportunities for professional development, leadership and succession planning in the federation and Shoscombe is taking advantage of these increased strategic opportunities. The appointment of the highly effective coordinator for RE and the support given to collective worship indicates the priorities held by school leaders to enhance the school's Christian character. Issues in the focus for development from the last inspection have been addressed in a manner that has brought positive outcomes for pupils in the school. The Rector, Community Football Coach and Children's Worker from the local Benefice play a significant part in supporting the identity of the school as a church school and pupils and staff benefit from strong working partnerships with a number of outside agencies and neighbouring church schools in the Church Valley Federation.