



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St John's Mead Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Hounds Road,
Chipping Sodbury,
South Gloucestershire,
BS37 6EE

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Gloucester

Local authority: South Gloucestershire

Dates of inspection: 10 June 2015

Date of last inspection: 14 July 2010

School's unique reference number: 109229

Headteacher: Nicola Berry

Inspector's name and number: David Scorer / Neville Norcross NS403 QA Assessor

School context

St John's Mead Church of England (CofE) VC Primary School is a larger than average primary school with 296 children. This school also maintains a nursery with 33 children. The majority of the children are drawn from the local town and surrounding areas. Most children come from white British heritage. The number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national average as is the number of children eligible for pupil premium and free school meals. There have been no significant changes to the staff team and they are well supported by the governing body.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St John's Mead CofE VC as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian values are at the heart of the school's ethos and underpin the high quality relationships throughout the school community.
- The outstanding leadership by the headteacher together with the effective teamwork of governors and staff provides strong direction for the development of the school's distinctive Christian character.
- The quality of the children's spiritual awareness promoted by the school's distinctive Christian character has a strong impact on their personal development.

Areas to improve

- In worship:
 - formalise the way in which worship is planned in order to ensure that the programme covers a broad and balanced range of themes.
 - provide more opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship so that they are able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of a range of themes.
- Broaden the children's understanding of diversity in order that they will appreciate that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith.

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

Life at St John's Mead VC Primary school is significantly shaped by an effective programme of distinctive Christian values. The result is that relationships are harmonious and supportive with clear evidence of respect and care in the way children behave towards the adults in school, other children and visitors. Children talk enthusiastically of the importance of these values in their lives and their strong belief that all the values help them to live and learn 'at home as well as in school'. One clear example was in a Key Stage One lesson where pupils' enjoyment and engagement was evident during the sharing of the story of Zacchaeus. This motivated the children to identify the school's key values of forgiveness and friendship displayed by Jesus and understand their importance in making a change for the better. One child said that Zacchaeus was a better man because 'he said sorry and he meant it'. Staff and governors are committed to making strong links between the school's values and biblical teaching. However, the children are not always secure in linking values to the life and teaching of Jesus. Children and staff have very positive attitudes towards their school and say that its Christian ethos helps shape the way that they 'all help each other out' and 'support each other in becoming global citizens'. This is reflected in the school's involvement and commitment in supporting the local community through a wide range of activities, including festive celebrations and the village carnival, as well as developing a link with the 'Hosanna School' in Africa. Parents explain ways in which the distinctive Christian character of the school is clearly expressed by staff. The result is that they have a good understanding of what the school stands for. This permeates life beyond school as demonstrated when, following a successful sports day, a parent was informed 'even if I win the race mummy, I will show humility by not celebrating too much'. The school's strong Christian ethos, collective worship and religious education (RE) are effective in supporting children's spiritual, moral and social development. The school has developed a shared understanding of spirituality and how it can be put into practice through curriculum planning, reflective areas in each classroom and around the school. Outside, a spiritual garden has been developed to provide a place where children can think and pray. Pupils from Year Six explained how everyone utilised this area to quietly reflect and ponder, 'especially if we are ever sad or if we have lost someone'. The impact of this provision is evaluated by staff and governors, who have identified high levels of spiritual development. This is due to the broad range of opportunities, resulting in high levels of engagement. Children enjoy RE, with the subject coordinator able to demonstrate a clear passion for the school's achievements to date and continual development. This is particularly evident in the school's book of values which shares excellent examples of success and a clear understanding of the areas for improvement. The children have very positive attitudes towards learning about people with other faiths. However the children's broader understanding of diversity within the Christian church is less well developed.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is at the heart of daily life in this distinctively Christian school. It is in worship that children begin to learn about the Christian values of their school and the impact they make on their relationships and attitudes. Worship is a time of quiet and stillness in the school day, whilst at the same time highly interactive with joyous singing, often coupled with enthusiastic accompanying actions. A rich and varied programme of themes is evident. Planning for this, however, does not have a formal structure and important themes and topics could easily be overlooked. There is a secure understanding of Christian festivals with pupil knowledge enhanced through the Christmas, Easter and Harvest events at church. These events are remarked upon by many parents as 'special times' where the school and local community can join as one, with the choral singing a particular highlight. These special settings promote spiritual development very well. There is a varied programme of collective worship leaders including a particularly dedicated and enthusiastic local church 'Open The Book' team and the

'Regenerate' team from the local Baptist church. A time of reflection and prayer is integral to worship as well as daily life at St John's with specific displays in each classroom to promote thought and contemplation. As a result, children say that they reflect and pray both at home and at school; often thinking back over the key messages of each day. Children speak confidently of what they have learned in worship. They have a sound understanding of some of the symbols of Christianity, such as the candle representing 'the light of God', and the cross that represents 'when Jesus died for us'. Children also have a good understanding of the meaning of the Trinity. Robust governor monitoring involving listening to pupils as well as to the overall school community, has resulted in changes that have made an impact on the life of the school. Children frequently participate in various aspects of worship, such as role play or leading the welcome and prayer. There are, however, only limited opportunities for them to plan and lead worship themselves.

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

The headteacher's Christian vision for the school and her strong commitment to this vision are inspirational. Her passion 'that every child has everything they need to thrive' ensures that the school's leaders and managers remain focused on children's needs both in terms of their learning and their wellbeing, particularly that of any vulnerable pupils. As a result of this vision, all members of staff work as a cohesive team and demonstrate respect and care for each other and feel valued whatever their role. School leaders and governors have a well-established understanding of how the Christian faith underpins all aspects of the school's life. A core set of values has recently been reviewed based on the Christian vision for the school. This was agreed following wide consultation which included the local church community. As a result, the school's Christian values have become even more firmly embedded and are having a significant impact on the whole school community. The headteacher is aware that the school's motto, whilst effectively promoted, does not acknowledge the specific Christian character of the school. Through regular visits to the school, governors have a good knowledge of strengths and areas that need further development. The school self evaluation and development plan, written by staff and governors in collaboration, grows from the belief that every child should experience success and be valued for his or her individual strengths. The school has a very effective partnership with parents who know they can talk with confidence to class teachers and senior staff. The associate priest sees the school as an important part of her ministry and has wide-ranging and significant involvement in the life of the school, which in turn has seen the church community swell. Governors recognise the commitment and dedication of both the headteacher and the priest in maintaining a highly positive relationship between the school and the church which impacts positively on its Christian character. The local church welcomes the school for Christian festival services in which pupils take part. These are very well attended by parents and governors. The governors understand the need to prepare for future leadership of the school and do so by sanctioning training for senior staff and subject leaders. This has brought measurable success with a previous school leader assuming the headship of a school within the cluster. The headteacher takes responsibility for keeping her own subject knowledge and expertise up-to-date and is involved in the establishment of a local cluster of leaders in church schools. Meeting regularly with this cluster ensures that she maintains an outward-looking approach to church school leadership and regularly learns from and contributes to the sharing of good practice with other church school leaders. The arrangements for RE and collective worship meet the statutory requirements.