



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Kingsway
Lyme Regis
Dorset DT7 3DY

Previous inspection grade: Good

Current SIAMS grade: Satisfactory

Diocese: Salisbury

Local authority: Dorset

Dates of inspection: 10 June 2016

Date of last inspection: 29 March 2011

School's unique reference number: 113851

Headteacher: Nick Kiddle

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

School context

St Michael's is smaller than the average size rural primary school with 135 children on roll. They are arranged into five class groups. The school has a small site. The large majority of children are of a white British heritage. The number of children with learning needs and/or disabilities is above the national average as is the number entitled to receive pupil premium. Overall attendance is in line with the national average. The headteacher was appointed on 1 June 2016 following a period as acting headteacher.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Michael's as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- Children are comfortable to openly share their thoughts and opinions on matters of faith and belief knowing that their views will be listened to with respect.
- Religious education (RE) makes a useful contribution to the children's growing moral and cultural development.
- The headteacher is leading the school community in developing a shared understanding and ownership of the school's Christian ethos.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that there is clarity between the school's five core values and the themes explored through collective worship and which of them are the Christian values that underpin the ethos; and that this is shared with the whole school community.
- Develop the use of questioning to deepen the children's understanding of Christian values through religious education (RE) and collective worship.
- Develop the skills of leaders and managers, including governors, to effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of the distinctive Christian ethos on the learning and wellbeing of children.

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

Following a review of the school's values, five core values were chosen by children and introduced in 2015. They are generosity, thankfulness, respect, perseverance and koinonia. Children have an awareness of these values and can link them to the stories they hear in collective worship which gives them a biblical context. For example, younger children were able to explain the story of the 'Lost Sheep' and the shepherd's perseverance in finding it. The core values also link to the children's personal and social development through classroom reflection time. These five core values, referred to as the Christian values, are promoted together with a further set of eighteen Christian values used to deliver themes in collective worship. Children refer to both and can articulate what they mean to them both in school and outside of it. However, there is a lack of clarity in which of these values are at the centre of the school's ethos and which set supports the other. Similarly, the way that the five core values have been regarded as being distinctively Christian is less clear. Values are reflected in the children's behaviour. They show kindness towards each other and the quality of relationships that exists between children and adults in school means that children are cared for and valued. Children are happy at school and say that they enjoy their learning. They make good friends and feel that they do well. The school is developing its understanding of spirituality. Recently, the introduction of a framework to support the way that children reflect has been introduced and is helping them to develop the language to explore and express their thoughts in greater depth. Reflection areas in each classroom provide satisfactory opportunities for children to respond to the messages they hear in acts of worship and at other times in the school day and, at their best, are interactive. Opportunities for children to develop a personal spirituality through experiences such as the use of reflection areas are still at an early stage.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Collective worship is an important time in the school day and one that children recognise as an essential part of being a church school. They understand that Bible stories teach them about Jesus and that this relates to values such as a friendship. They are able to make some links between the eighteen values used to plan the worship programme and the school's five core characteristics. Older children explain how these values can help them in their lives. There are fewer opportunities for children to explore what these values mean to them personally and how they might use them to interpret their own understanding of messages from Bible stories. Children have good opportunities to pray during the school day. They pray in the classroom using the prayer areas or use the 'lobster pot' in the hall to add prayers and thoughts. Children understand that prayer is a way of talking to God to say thank you for His creation, to ask for forgiveness or for help. Older children appreciate that prayers can be said whether you have a faith or not because 'God made everyone and He loves us all'. The weekly 'Open the Book' act of worship is very popular with children because they are regularly involved in leading and delivering it; working together with the team from the church. Children are developing their understanding of the nature of the Trinity. They are confident to express their views and ideas about God as Father and Jesus as Son. They are less familiar with the concept of the Holy Spirit and in being able to articulate what He means to them. The new headteacher has introduced a system to record and evaluate collective worship. Teachers are involved in this process as are children to some extent.

The effectiveness of religious education is satisfactory

The school has very recently introduced a new scheme of work for RE to support the delivery of the Dorset syllabus. The new scheme places greater emphasis on enquiry and exploration of religious concepts but it is too early to securely say whether this is having an impact on the quality of RE and outcomes for children. However, children respond positively when asked questions and are engaged and enthusiastic in their learning. They share their views confidently and listen with respect to the opinions of others. There are times in lessons when children make some quite profound comments but these are not always followed up by the teacher.

Similarly, opportunities to explore the children's learning in depth are sometimes missed which means that they do not always make as much progress as they are capable. When these opportunities are taken, the children's learning, and the progress they make, is enhanced considerably. This happens when teachers have the confidence to adapt their planning and deliver the content in a creative way. Examples of this were seen during the inspection. However, it is early days in the delivery of the new scheme and this creativity has not been fully developed. Assessment is also at a very early stage. Members of staff are developing their skills to accurately assess the children's work with some scrutiny of work having taken place to ensure that there is a more consistent understanding of expectations across the school. Religious education makes a good contribution to the children's moral and cultural development. Children show an appreciation and respect for a range of world faiths and, through discussion in RE, have a clear sense of justice knowing right from wrong. Links to the Christian value being explored in collective worship are made where appropriate and enhance the children's learning. The shared leadership of RE is currently being developed under the management of the headteacher.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school are satisfactory

The recent appointment of the headteacher is bringing a reinvigoration to the school's Christian ethos. He has already put in place some initiatives that are raising the profile of the distinctive church character. In particular, he is developing a shared ownership of the ethos and values by involving members of the school community to a greater extent. For example, staff have met with members of the ethos committee and have a clearer understanding of their role. Likewise, he has introduced systems to record and begin to evaluate collective worship. These are at an early stage and still in the process of being developed to find a method to monitor and evaluate effectively. The headteacher is developing his understanding of the purpose of being a church school and has a good grasp of how the school as a church school can move forward. He is currently overseeing the management of RE together with two members of staff and this reflects his more collegiate style of leadership. Leadership and management is satisfactory overall because systems to ensure that the Christian ethos is maintained and promoted are not currently effective. For example, governors have not monitored or challenged the introduction of some initiatives that could have a negative impact on the way in which Christian values are perceived. The vicar has a good understanding of the school as a church school. Together with headteacher, she is keen to see further development of the role of children in exploring values and spirituality through RE and collective worship. Links with the church are strong. Children value the times when they visit the church to celebrate major Christian festivals saying that it is an integral part of what makes a church school. Parents agree with this and appreciate that the school encourages their children to ask questions about faith and belief openly and with confidence. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report June 2016 St Michael's CE VA Primary School Lyme Regis DT7 3DY