



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Kilmersdon Road
Radstock
Bath BA3 3QH

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Bath and Wells

Local authority: Bath and North East Somerset

Dates of inspection: 21 January 2015

Date of last inspection: 8 January 2010

School's unique reference number: 134238

Headteacher: Nicola Smith

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

School context

St Nicholas is an average size primary school with 221 children on roll. It is situated in an urban setting and the majority of children are of a white British heritage and come from a wide catchment area. The school serves a community with high deprivation. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average as are the numbers who receive support from the pupil premium. Attendance is slightly below the national average. The headteacher was appointed in September 2014. There have been considerable changes of staff in the last year.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Nicholas Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The introduction of six core Christian values is making an increasingly important contribution to the children's personal development and their learning.
- The place of prayer in the life of the school is making an impact on the wellbeing of children.
- The growing link between school and parish church is bringing renewed vigour to the life of both school and parish communities.

Areas to improve

- Equip children with the skills and language to be able to express their growing understanding of the new core Christian values to help them explore their spirituality in greater depth.
- Ensure the existing programme of collective worship gives children an understanding of the Christian roots of the school's core values.
- Ensure the governing body is insightful and effective in monitoring and evaluating the school's Christian ethos, to stimulate further improvement.

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

The recent review of the school's values, with the subsequent identification of a core set of six, has raised awareness across the whole school community of its Christian character and how it lies at the root of the school's distinctive ethos. The process of choosing these core values itself has allowed the whole school community to think about what it means to them to be a church school. The impact of compassion, hope, trust, forgiveness, endurance and koinonia is becoming increasingly evident as an important part of school life as they are more clearly integrated in lessons and taught through collective worship. Children are becoming more confident to articulate that these core values have roots in Christian teaching and are developing the ability to explain how they have relevance to their own lives. This is evident in lessons where children have opportunities to explore what these values mean to them, especially with regard to their personal development and matters of faith. At times children find it challenging to explain what some of these values mean to them, especially if they have been taken out of context, because they have not yet fully acquired the language to support them in articulating this. Greater reference to values as an integral part of children's learning is beginning to make an impact on the children's learning, which shows signs of improvement, as their progress exceeds national expectations. Data indicates average attainment overall. Children are comfortable to express their thoughts and ideas on matters of faith and belief with confidence and listen with respect to the views of others. The introduction of 'stilling' in Year 6 is making a very effective contribution to the children's wellbeing by providing times for them to be calm and to reflect. Religious education provides good opportunities for children to reflect on concepts such as justice and belief and thereby contributes to the children's social and moral development, and this is clearly set within a Christian framework. Relationships throughout the school are based on an awareness of the needs of others and mutual respect. Children can relate their own behaviour in school to some of the core Christian values and are beginning to consider how an understanding of a value such as koinonia can help them to have a better appreciation of diverse communities. As one young child said, 'If you get lots of different people living in a community, it is so important to be kind to each other and love everyone just the same.'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The increasing importance of the place of prayer in the everyday life of the school has been welcomed by children. They say that the greater opportunities to reflect in their classrooms and in the prayer areas around school have given them time to be still and quietly think about matters that are important to them. Children explain that this has helped them to have greater appreciation of the importance of stillness and reflection in their own lives. This is evident in the way that children use the prayer area at lunch time as they seek a place to find peace. Older children in particular have a very good understanding of the purpose of prayer and the difference it can make to a person's life. The more regular weekly visits to the parish church to celebrate acts of worship with the vicar are also making a considerable contribution to the children's growing awareness of their developing spirituality. Planning for collective worship has improved. There is greater coherence in themes that explore the Christian year and a more carefully thought through progression to the growing understanding of how Bible stories help children to make better sense of the new core values. This is an aspect of the worship planning that still needs to be developed so that even clearer links between values and Christian teaching have relevance to the children's own lives. Children have good opportunities to develop their understanding of the Trinity. The youngest children explain God the Father and Jesus as His Son. They are building on this to explore the nature of the Holy Spirit and its significance to them. Children have good opportunities to participate in acts of worship and respond with enthusiasm to songs and prayers. There are currently more limited opportunities for them to plan and lead acts of worship. Some monitoring of worship has taken place by governors but thus has not yet developed into a systematic approach that regularly feeds in to school improvement.

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

The appointment of the current headteacher in September 2014 has meant that the school has begun to address the areas for development from the previous report and has started to put measures in place to further develop the impact of the school's Christian ethos. The headteacher has the drive and commitment to ensure that the school continues to build on its church foundation so that its distinctive Christian ethos has greater meaning and purpose for all members of the school community. To this end she has quickly galvanised the school to review its mission and the values that are at the heart of the school community. The impact of these new core values is still at an early stage but the headteacher has a very clear grasp of what needs to be done to embed them into all aspects of school life. She is supported by members of staff in achieving this who are increasingly applying the values to the children's learning in lessons and their wellbeing. Governors have responded well to these recent initiatives but have yet to develop the skills necessary for effective monitoring of the impact of these values. A crucial element to the successful implementation of these values, and future progress as a church school, is the quality of support and involvement of all governors to ongoing evaluation. The school is working hard to ensure that parents have opportunities to be involved in the way that the school is developing its Christian foundation. Parents say that the Christian values equip children for future life in society and particularly appreciate that this is done in an inclusive way. They are keen that the school continues to keep them fully informed about the developments in the promotion of church school distinctiveness. Links with the parish church have become more meaningful through the recent introduction of a weekly act of worship held in the church by the vicar. Children are excited by this and are quickly associating this as a main expression of their school's Christian ethos. The school meets the statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship.

SIAMS report January 2015 St Nicholas CE VC Primary School Radstock BA3 3QH